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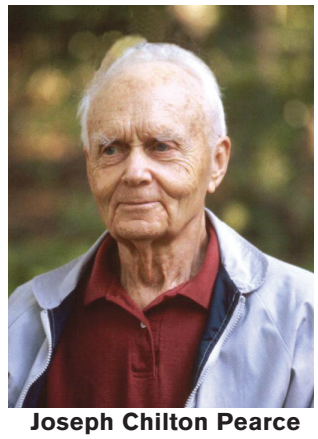
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OUR COVER Buffy Sainte-Marie
www.creative-native.com
She's a magical musician, Academy Award winner and educator. Buffy's current creative involvements include Youth Council on Race, Nihewan Foundation, Cradleboard Teaching Project, On-line Digital Art Gallery, UNESCO spokesperson, Order of Canada, while continuing her musical and talking engagements globally. Born in Saskatchewan she has grown from her roots into a beautiful tree of creativity and inspiration. Her website at www.creative-nation.com is well worth a visit. Buffy Sainte-Marie will be in Vancouver March 13 for a concert at the Chan Centre during the Talking Stick Festival www.fullcircle.ca and workshops. See Buffy's feature article this edition.

ISSUE 164 MARCH 2005

IN THIS ISSUE

CULTURE/ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Bologna's co-operative success – Bob Williams 5
Envy (Part 2): The Seven Deadly Spins – Geoff Olson 8
Story Slam continues – The Choice – Trina Ferguson 9
Buffy Sainte-Marie's Magic Is Alive – Joseph Roberts 16
Learning together – Robert Alstead 21

MEDIA

Attack Poodles – book review – Geoff Olson 10

EDUCATION

Interview with Joseph Chilton Pearce 6

ENVIRONMENT

Diversity creates stability and security – David Suzuki 14
Lessons from the trenches of life – Guy Dauncey 15
BC Liberals stalling on wind power – Arne Hansen 15
Duke of Hazards – Johnny Frem 33

HEALTH

Codex criminalizes vitamins – Helke Ferrie 6
Mercury fillings – the enemy within – Jane Ullyett 13
Paying fair prices for food – Marya Skrypiczajko 18
Organic: simple and healthful – Vesanto Melina 19
Confidence – Crystal Andrus 20

SPIRITUALITY

What do we know? – Gwen Randall-Young 11
Free yourself from your mind – Eckhart Tolle 12

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR 29
RESOURCE DIRECTORY 22
CLASSIFIEDS 30
ZODIAC 30
DATEBOOK 31

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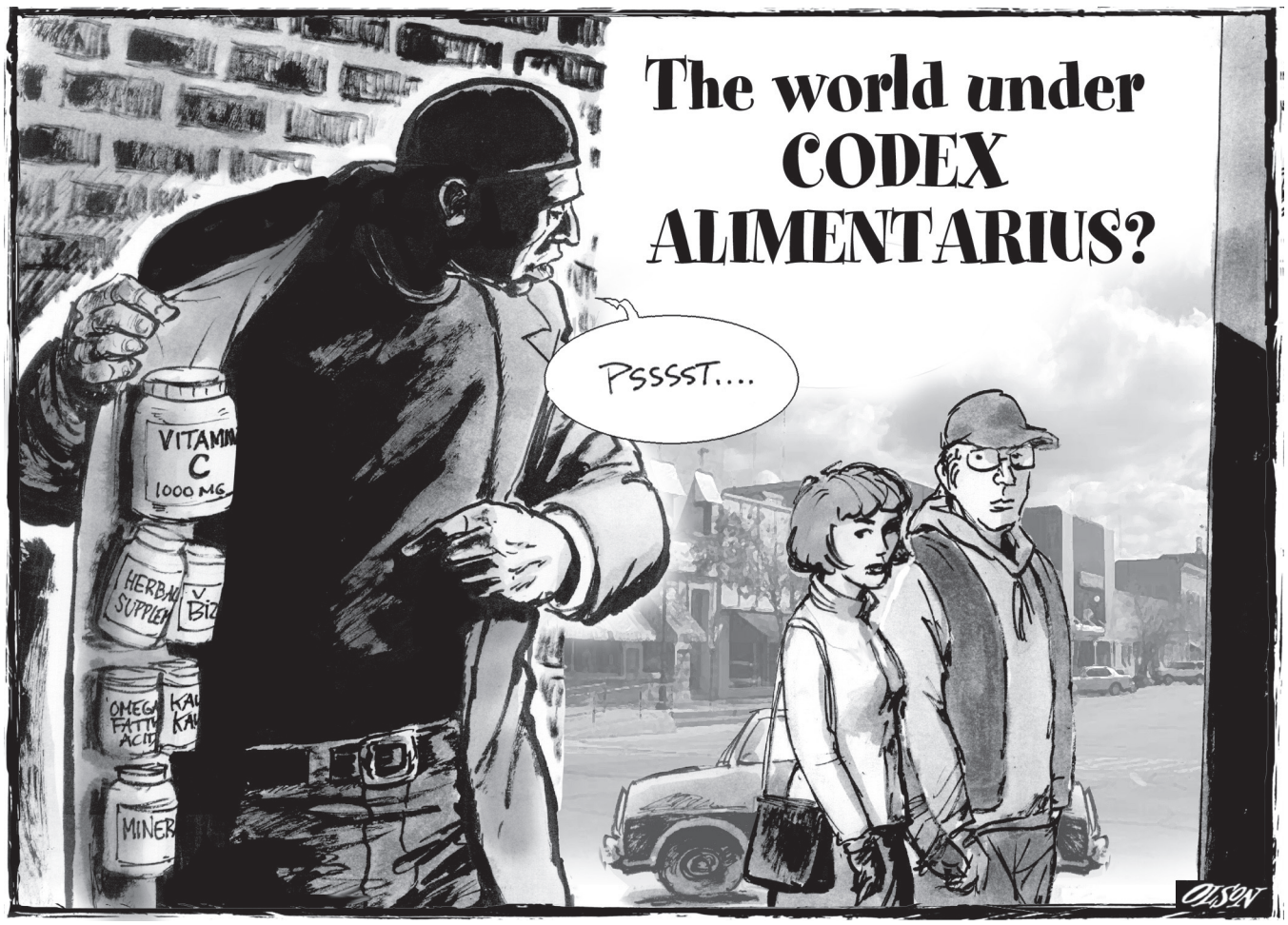

Why Bologna matters

ITALIAN CITY SHOWS US A BETTER WAY

by Bob Williams

It is hard to believe in this new century, but when I was a kid growing up on Vancouver's east side, it was primarily an Anglo neighbourhood.

The exception to all this, however, was a post-war influx of a growing number of Italians who made our neighbourhood their home. These new neighbours brought with them what seemed to me an exotic view of the world, and maybe more important to a growing boy, a love for fine food and wine that was rare in our own Anglo household.

All of this is my way of explaining my continuing love affair with the Italians and the way they see the world. My renewed romance commenced once more on a study tour of the Emilia-Romagna region, which surrounds Bologna, about eight years ago. It was in this amazing area just east of Tuscany, that some of my colleagues at VanCity and I learned about the value system of these people, their co-operative economy and their unique history.

Central Bologna has maintained its medieval structure despite being a bustling medium-sized city. It has centuries-old buildings, many of which are linked to ancient city walls.

The main square is Piazza Maggiore, built in pre-Roman times, while the magnificent Piazza San Stefano a few blocks away features a church going back to the fourth century. Nearby, the city's venerable yet vibrant University of Bologna, an institution that goes back to 1088, was the first university in Europe.

It was at this university, in the economics faculty, that we began to understand the nature of the Emilian economy and the profoundly different way the Bolognese do business.

The head of the university's graduate program in co-operative economics, Dr Stefano Zamagni, explained the fundamentals of their worldview; Zamagni sees a "balanced triangle" as the model for a caring, advanced economic system. Two sides of that triangle he describes in a manner common to most Western liberal democracies:

· the market system and the exchange of equivalent goods.

· the role of the state and the redistribution of wealth to support the weakest in society.

Professor Zamagni argues that the British shift to the welfare state after the Second World War was a noble experiment by an advanced social democratic government. But the professor also argues that over time, we have seen the weaknesses of this system, which can too often be disabling amongst the very people it was designed to help, while ironically empowering a distant bureaucratic elite.

At the same time, Zamagni and his colleagues argue that we should maintain the original goals they had in Britain, while re-thinking the process and the delivery system. That is precisely what they have done in Emilia-Romagna.

The Emilians have determined that there must be a third side to the triangle, namely co-operation and reciprocity, which is very much a part of their society and economy.

The people of this region, while accepting the reality of a highly competitive world, also believe there is a great need for co-operation as well as competition. Their own economy reflects this unique braiding of these two threads of co-operation and competition.

Emilia-Romagna is highly entrepreneurial, with some 300,000 small enterprises, of which 100,000 are small manufacturers. In addition, the region supports some 15,000 co-operative firms. More than that, Emilians have developed a pervasive co-operative infrastructure to support small- and medium-sized firms.

The end result of this pattern is probably the most pluralistic networked system of individual and family enterprises in the world. The co-operative networks allow the small firms to do what they do best, without the back offices (there's co-op support for that), or the encumbrance of international marketing (there's sectoral support for that) or funding for research or technological transfer (there's co-operative infrastructure for that as well).

The result has been a galaxy of small, medium-sized, individual or family-owned enterprises that work together in a networked, co-operative way to jointly produce high value-added products. These products are, in turn, exported.

In a sense, the Emilians have built themselves the best of two different worlds. Some have described it as the Emilian Model.

These thoughtful folk have also reworked the social side of their society. Over the past few decades, as the northern Italians concluded that the state was a poor deliverer of social services, they began a massive shift in the delivery of what Professor

continued on page 31

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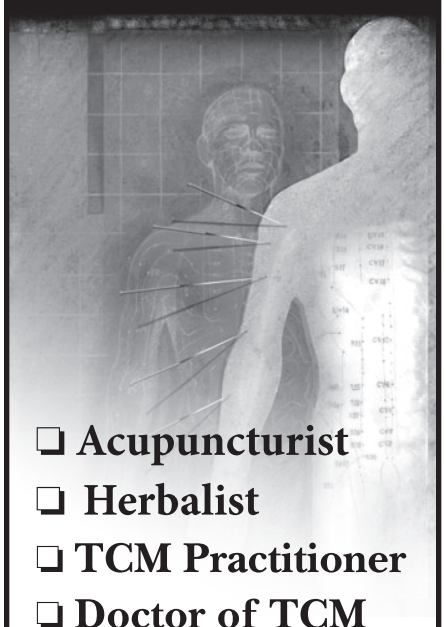

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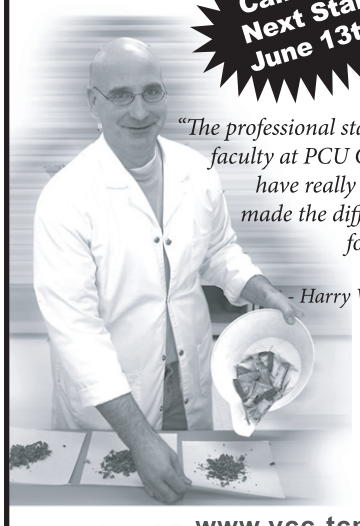

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Interview with Joseph Chilton Pearce

EDUCATION

by Brent Cameron

Brent: Joe, as you look back over 50 years and four books on child development, I am wondering where you are at today. What are you thinking and feeling now? Perhaps as a starting place I can quote from the last page of your latest book, *The Biology of Transcendence*. "A human nurtured instead of shamed, and loved instead of driven by fear, develops a different brain and therefore a different mind. He will not act against the well-being of another nor against his larger body, the living Earth."

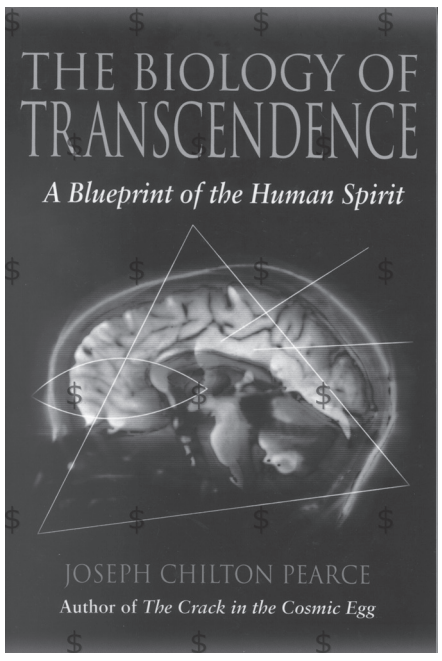
Joseph Chilton Pearce: I stand by that. The word transcendence means the ability to go beyond limitation and constraint and that's what the biological system is designed to do, provided nurturing and a safe base are given. Over the past 50 years researchers showed us more about the real development of children than we've ever known in history. Ironically in North America our education system is specifically going point for point against every single research discovery made.

BC From John Taylor Gatto's research into the founding and history of education, he clearly states that education was developed as a vehicle of social control to condition children for the work force. It was never really about nurturing the human spirit.

JCP Indeed. I think behaviour modification is behind it really. Even though that might be outmoded up at Harvard it's still the underlying force in education. So you get a cultural conformity. Recently I called it the conflict between cultural and biological imperatives, the driving forces that we have within us to develop and the driving forces in culture to make us conform to certain patterns and behaviour. That conflict literally splits the infant child right from the beginning.

BC In our work at Wondertree we notice a significant difference in the quality of learning in children who are bonded and are living in nurturing and open families. Their ability to learn is an entirely different experience than somebody who is in conflict with themselves and others.

JCP The very nature of most of our educational system is that it sets up the fear syndrome to coerce children into learning. The fear of failure and constant testing, the very act of testing a child throws them


THE BIOLOGY OF TRANSCENDENCE
A Blueprint of the Human Spirit
JOSEPH CHILTON PEARCE
Author of The Crack in the Cosmic Egg

into a defensive mode at which point their brain really has shifted its energy focus from the higher intelligence down into the ancient reptilian survival defence brain. So testing in itself is unfair because you never really get a working idea of where that child is or what their capacities are. They themselves haven't accessed their higher intelligence in a state of defence like that.

BC Joe, I imagine that you, more than anyone else, is responsible for introducing the idea of the triune brain, and more recently the four-fold brain concept to the world. Could you talk about the evolution of the three-fold to the four-fold brain discussed in your last book?

JCP Recently, at the Howard Hughes medical establishment in the mid-west, a powerful big research centre, a group of geneticists and neurologists came out with the following announcement. Through DNA tracing they can prove that the older neuro-system of nature, the mammalian brain and so on, were a long time building, taking more than tens of thousands of years. However, the recent developments in the neo-cortex took remarkably few years in an evolutionary time frame.

These scientists claim the human brain was added to at a very late date and very quickly, that there wasn't any of this random mutation selectivity as proposed by Darwin, which works perfectly well with the foundational older brains we have in our heads. They claim it doesn't work in relation to the human brain. I think that's a very interesting comment to come out from some very sound scientific studies.

Research into the latest developing aspect of the human brain, the pre-frontal lobes, has been going on for close to 20 years now. It was only in about 1988 they discovered that the adolescent goes into profound brain growth spurts in those lobes and that it isn't complete until about age 21. All this new research into the adolescent brain being so dramatically different from either that of the earlier child or the later adult has been brought up time and again in the popular journals, like *Time* and *US News* and so on.

That's very encouraging, because they're pointing out that the brain itself, especially its higher functions are in a profound and

Codex criminalizes vitamins, supplements and herbs

by Helke Ferrie

Codex Alimentarius, a United Nations trade committee, a decade ago began working on "harmonization" of the worldwide sale of supplements. It decided in November 2004 that vitamins, minerals and all other types of medicinally useful supplements, commonly also found in foods, should be traded only as pharmaceuticals. Paradoxically, the committee decided that health claims must not be made for any of them, and in large dosages they must only be available by prescription.

Codex requires that, as of August 1, 2005, all supplements have to be subject to pharmaceutical-type regulation, which requires establishment of toxicity levels and maximum/minimum dosages, before they can be sold. The principal Codex report which provides the "scientific" grounds for this impending wholesale removal of all supplements is in German and not generally available.

Legal action was taken by health freedom groups on European Union constitutional grounds and heard in the International Court in Luxembourg on January 25 this year. The result will be known in June. Because of the interlocking international treaties to which Canada is a signatory, Codex resolutions are binding for Canadians, and the World Trade Organization enforces compliance. Federal bill C-420, which gets second reading in Ottawa March 3, is designed to protect Canadians from Codex.

To find out more and what you can do to stop this process by supporting this bill go to www.kospublishing.com *and click on the Codex alert banner found on the home page.*

rapid state of change and growth. This means the adolescent needs a great deal more nurturing, empathy, understanding, tolerance and care than at almost any other period in their lives.

This verifies the work of James Prescott many years ago at the National Institute of Health. He said the adolescent is as vulnerable and subject to damage as the little toddler first taking its steps. Adolescents are taking their first steps into a new world with new bodies and new brains in formation and new hormones and they need every bit the care and attention and nurturing as the toddler.

Of course in North America we tend to treat the adolescent as public enemy number one. We distrust and denigrate them. This is exactly the opposite of what they need at this point in their lives.

BC That's an exciting message. It reflects on the situation here in BC. Our government has just put increasing expectations on our teenagers to graduate. Joe, when you are here April 1 and 2, I hope you are able to meet all forty of the teenagers that our government is unwilling to fund because they refuse to take the courses imposed on them. They are some of the brightest and most talented young people I've ever met. They would all be recognized as gifted if you understand Howard Gardner's ideas of multiple intelligences.

JCP Here in the US, you can get all sorts of money if you come up with a proposal for how to keep kids in high school. But, if you try to get one penny for preventing the damage that's being done to them you can't get any funding for that. High school is one of the major places of cultural conformity and the price we pay for it is pretty steep. That certainly doesn't register on government because they benefit from a compliant population. We've got to get the message across to parents themselves, because we can't expect it from institutions.

By the way, I'll be happy to speak with those teenagers.

One of the ideas that I will want to share with them, that I am talking about everywhere, is the fact that teenagers are driven by three factors that we never give them credit for.

One is a high sense of idealism. They become very idealistic as early as 11 or 12. That's part of the great brain change that takes place following the shift between concrete and formal operational thinking. They become very idealistic and look for models of this new idealism in their culture and when you get to thinking about the kinds of models we're giving them, you shudder.

The second factor is the sense of hidden greatness. They're convinced that deep within they have a core of themselves that is very great and that if people just realized how great they were they would respect them. Of course, all we do is try to capitalize on that and make them jump through our hoops to achieve success. But, they're really talking about their own transcendence that's involved in that big shift of the brain that occurs in adolescence.

Joseph Chilton Pearce and Brent Cameron

Finally there's a sense of great expectation, that something tremendous is supposed to happen, and they wait for it right around the next corner or the next hill moment by moment. They always gesture to the heart when they're talking about this because, literally, their next stage of evolutionary development is in the offing.

Rudolf Steiner said the heart longs for this and if the young person were opened to the heart it would teach us a new way to think, and we've never thought of that before. But certainly the new field of neuro-cardiology and all the discoveries about the heart and the heart/brain connection make it perfectly clear what is happening in that teenager.

It is apparent to me that these lines of research are contingent on one another, and it all begins to focus on the teenage years as such a critical period. As a culture we need to start and really be attentive and careful with those young people.

BC I certainly agree. One of our research projects about 10 years ago was with a group of teenagers. For four years these young people were given freedom, love and an opportunity to discover their life's purpose. The past 10 years have seen such a phenomenal growth of intelligence and wellness and heartfulness in these young adults that it's been astounding. Currently a doctoral thesis is being written to investigate these results. It's been a phenomena that we never predicted and seems to point to what you talk so eloquently about in your books, the intelligence of the heart.

JCP One of the things we find out about imprisoned teenagers, who are there because they didn't conform culturally, is that they can be salvaged with so little effort by appealing to just the three factors that I just mentioned.

BC Joe, these three factors relate directly to the development of the latest evolution of the human brain, the left and right pre-frontal lobes. Can you talk more about this?

JCP I think it certainly brings to mind the work of a hero of mine from Princeton who died in 1994 named Julian James. His book *The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, is an invaluable work and in there you begin to pick up the reason for the twinned brains that we have through the higher third and fourth brain, and why you would need that kind of division of labour. Exactly how that works in the prefrontal cortex I'm not sure, but it reflects exactly the same kind of division of labour you have in the neocortex, the rest of the high brain. It seems to me that it does serve two purposes – to maintain unity and communication and stability and so on through the so-called right brain activity, and then the adventurousness and the free aspects of the left hemisphere and its capacities. You can't have one without the other. They're sort of like creator and created giving rise to each other.

I think that holds throughout all these higher systems of intelligence. The one works for wholeness and the other works for novelty. You could say one works for the unvarying stability of the system and the other for the variations that can easily lead to instability but nevertheless are continually opening up new worlds and new possibilities. I think you have to have both from the evolutionary standpoint of the human.

BC If we think about how science understands light, it's either a particle or a wave and it depends on how we measure it. Our two models for light reflect our own duality of mind where the universe either looks like a particle or a wave. In more general terms this duality becomes content and process. The content is kind of the male hierarchical perspective, and on the left side is the feminine, wave, nurturing, process part. We really need a marriage between the two.

JCP This in turn relates to Gaia and the whole theory of the Earth and the current crisis that we are bringing about. There's certainly an importance for the return to the balance of the feminine that's involved

continued on page 33

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Envy - part 2

THE SEVEN DEADLY SPINS CONTINUES

by Geoff Olson

Greed drives the desire for profit at any cost. Envy is a mainstay of the fashion industry, and marketing as a whole. Anger is subtly exploited in the Army of One fantasies of video games and recruitment advertisements. Pride fuels the "high self-esteem" bandwagon. In the era of hypercapitalism, these and most of the other so-called deadly sins have been rehabilitated by the market as positive, even praiseworthy, states of mind. "Sin" has been spun. Hence, what I call The Deadly Spins.

A teacher friend once told me he discovered that 30-some students at the high school where he taught had a regular cocaine habit. The surprising aspect: the female users were primarily taking the drug to keep thin, rather than get high.

Bizarre, but not a total mystery. Many healthy young women find their bodies spectacularly shabby in comparison to the skeletal standard offered by Hollywood starlets, magazine models and runway wraiths. They envy the professional anorexic's life-negating perfection, which has been cross-referenced with all sorts of media-mediated baggage: wealth, style, status and power.

Gluttony, sloth, lust, greed, anger, envy, pride: of the seven "deadly spins," the most self-corrosive is envy.

"It is certain that envy is the worst sin that is, for all other sins are sins only against one virtue, whereas envy is against all virtue and against all goodness," wrote Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales*. "For envy is bitter about all the good things that belong to another, and in this way, it is different from all other sins. For almost all other sins give some sort of pleasure in themselves, save only envy, which always has in itself anguish and sorrow."

Envy has probably been with humanity at least since the emergence of consciousness itself; the difference today is its cultural scale. It's become more than Chaucer's bitterness "about all the good things that belong to another." Envy is turbocharged by the consumer market's capacity to traffic in images, in a manner far beyond the grainy black-and-white halftones of only half a century ago. "In no other form of society in history has there been such a concentration of images, such a density of visual messages," writes art critic John Berger. The visual landscape is the hook for the forces of publicity:

"Within publicity, choices are offered between this cream and that cream, that car and this car, but publicity as a system only makes a single proposal. It proposes to each of us that we transform ourselves or our lives by buying something more. Publicity persuades us of such a transformation by showing us people who have apparently been transformed and are, as a result, enviable. The state of being envied is what constitutes glamour, and publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour. The publicity image steals our love of ourselves as we are and offers it back to us for the price of the product."

Most adults have some intellectual defences against this paper-thin paradigm. But children and adolescents have few or none, and today face a marketing onslaught sharpened like stilettos by focus groups, psychographics and all the other dark arts of spin. (In fact, with the exception of items such as cars and dwellings, many advertisers no longer flog product to the over-35 demographic. Studies show you can only build "brand loyalty" by targeting the five to 15 set.)

Envy compels the young consumer of pop-culture towards the camera's eye, in search of envy's Holy Grail: fame. So-called reality TV shows trade on this mostly empty promise, with young unknowns hoodwinked into thinking they can be "famous for being famous."

Even for those who aren't actively seeking celebrity, the camera-conscious zeitgeist compels them to think of themselves, if only subliminally, as starring in their own productions. In *Life: The Movie,* movie critic Neil Gabler of *The New Yorker* claims the US entertainment industry has democratized the idea of celebrity, extending the idea of performance into daily life:

"Over the years our movie going and television watching has been impregnating the American consciousness with the contentions and esthetics of entertainment, until we have become performers ourselves, performing our own lives out of the shards of movies. One might even think of American life, including quotidian American life, as a vast production in which virtually every object is a prop, every space is a set, every person is an actor and every experience is a scene in a continuing narrative."

Nearly 50 years ago, sociologist David Riesman identified the emergence of a new type of social character in the US that he called "other-directed" – by which he meant, essentially, that one's goals were directed toward satisfying the expectations of others. In other words, an audience. By definition, other-directed Americans were conscious of performance – a self-consciousness that led another sociologist, Erving Goffman, to conclude that in the 20th century, "life itself is a dramatically enacted thing."

Place the cultural DNA of "other-directness" into the petri dish of the US entertainment industry, and voila: you have the cult of celebrity, with envy fueling a continually frustrated search for identity. A sense of discontent is central to the revenue flow. From the tabloid rack to the cosmetic counter to the television celebrity profile, there's big box office in subtly pushing the consumer toward dissatisfaction with his or her appearance, lifestyle and identity.

Writes Gabler: "Acting like a cultural Ebola virus, entertainment has even invaded organisms no one would ever have imagined could provide amusement." He points to the strange case of Dr. Timothy Leary, the ex-Harvard professor and sixties icon, who "turned his death into entertainment by using his computer webpage to chronicle his deterioration from prostate cancer, a show which ended with a video of him drinking a toxic cocktail in what he called a 'visible, interactive suicide.' "

In modern day North America, celebrity and envy are joined at the hip: the Siamese twins of the corporate-sponsored social contract. According to US media critic Todd Gitlin, "to speak of a culture of celebrity nowadays is nearly to commit a redundancy." Instant stardom has become the all-purpose spray-on, to be liberally applied on everything from products to politicians, for a branded, otherworldly glow.

To Cintra Wilson, sometime screenwriter and former LA resident, this culture of fawning obsession over superstars has become the secular religion of our time, one filled with false messiahs and empty rituals: "It is generally not the icons themselves that I jolly and assail; it's the huge tumescent aura of Otherness, the grandiose Largitutude and supermagnified glamour of these deranged old musicians and dumb pretty kids and Sacred Cow Ornamental personages that I attack."

Wilson insists the machinery of fame, with its promise of global attention and big bucks, can reduce real talents to camera-hungry hacks, and the rest of us to hungry ghosts at a banquet where we will never find a seat. In a media-mediated world where you can never be too rich or too thin, it's no surprise that some young outsiders will reduce themselves to drug-taking wraiths in an effort to reach an illusory ideal.

In the forward to her book, *A Massive Swelling*, the author smashes celebrity's hall of mirrors into shards, and exposes the little person behind the curtain:

"I attack the maddening blizzard of tinsel scattered in the icons' wake: the tidal waves of false awe glaring off their shiny suits. I swipe at the lurid neon head of the amplified celebrity wizard and not the frail, dumpy little nebbish behind the big screen of fire, because deep down we're all delicate and pitiable inside. I believe that deep down, everyone is fundamentally an OK Joe deserving of your civility and compassion, even the ones I really hate, like Richard Dreyfus."

Geoff Olson is a Vancouver writer and political cartoonist gefo@telus.net

Story Slam continues

Members of Bolts of Fiction have organized a successful monthly event in Vancouver called the Story Slam. It's an audience-judged competition like Poetry Slam; the only difference is that the stories are five minutes rather than the three minutes for poems.

There's prize money for the top three stories and publication in Common Ground *for the winning story. If you know anyone who tells a good story – a cop, a cab driver or a bartender who keeps you entertained, they qualify.*

Whether their story is true or an outright lie, whether they'll agonize over every word, memorize it and rehearse in front of a mirror or casually step up to the mike and make it up on the spot, send them to Our Town Cafe, 245 East Broadway, the second Wednesday of every month.

Join the group at 9 pm if you'd just like to sit back and be entertained. If you come at 7 pm, you can join in on Word Whips, 10-minute timed writing exercises and an open mike to share the results.

The following story was the February winner.

THE CHOICE

by Trina Ferguson

The pain of living had brought her there; the pain of living would save her. Dancing on the edge of sanity, she repeated the delusions over and over in her mind as the breeze whipped her hair into a tangled noose beneath her neck. It no longer mattered who was dead or alive, who had rejected or hurt her. All that mattered right now was would she jump or not.

Back and forth the idea shook her body, more than the gusts of wind at her side. It was a great height, but there was always a painful chance of survival. A life with a mangled body and psychosis was too much to comprehend. Should she risk it? What had happened? What went wrong?

Trina Ferguson

Her self esteem was barraged with feelings of worthlessness and despair. Those nagging demons in her head constantly told her, "You're doing something wrong, you're going to fail," or "It's not good enough." The impossible standards of her own rules made living unbearable sometimes. "Buy this." "Don't support him." "Give to charity." "That's bad for the environment."

On and on these thoughts critiqued her every action. How could she make a choice each day in her life without hurting someone, somewhere? Most of the rich were striving for their own fortune and this was at the expense of the very poorest. Where was the middle class? Working to make ends meet, tired and frustrated at the end of the day. Forget the impossible standard of politically correct living. It was each man for himself in today's society.

It all seemed so hopeless to her. The world did not make sense. There was too much pain and suffering. The countless tragedies that took place were often preventable yet too few people seemed to give a damn. Somebody, somewhere was being murdered, raped, molested, beaten, or stolen from. Can we somehow stop all this from going on? Poverty was endless, from the Third World to the First.

Maybe if we came together we could help each other. Simplistic themes and ideas played out in her head and kept her from seeing her own happiness.

Was that why she was standing on the edge of the bridge trembling? Not really. The pain, loneliness and pointlessness of life often swept over her. She struggled, gasping for air in the emotional undertow. So many tears, so many sad memories; she felt like a broken record, skipping over the same aching thoughts for eternity. "Leave me alone!" The dark moods that descended upon her left her scrambling for home. What home? Where do you go when nothing feels like home anymore? She searched endlessly for reasons to laugh and smile. A bouquet of flowers, a little flirting, maybe a good movie would cheer her up. Some days it was a crap shoot what could change her mood, if anything could at all. Looking over the edge she cried and cried. The cars were speeding past while headlights illuminated the railing for her. What would that last descent feel like? Would she feel the pain, and always, the most dreaded question, what if she survived it?

Nervously contemplating, she looked around. Where were all these people coming from? Rush hour was long gone, yet there seemed to be a steady flow of walkers tonight. Let me be alone, please, she willed. You have no idea what is going on. Paranoia kept her mind ticking at a frantic pace as she looked from side to side. Sweat was beading on her forehead as her hands gripped the edge for balance. The ocean swirled beneath her and a boat passed by.

Why, she thought, was I given this life to throw away, when so many others are condemned to die? Gladly she would take their place at this moment. But she knew the folly of this thought. Only then would she feel any real devotion to live. To live. Remember, God remember, what did it feel like to really live? The taste of it, the

continued on page 31

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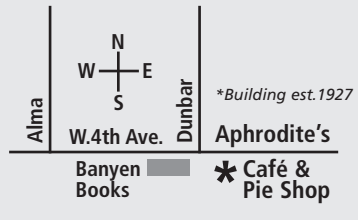

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Attack Poodles

MEDIA

Book review by Geoff Olson

If the Washington press corps are the lap dogs, and the rest of the mainstream press are the nap dogs, the ranks of CNN, MSNBC and Fox News are the yap dogs; the attack poodles in James Wolcott's hilarious evisceration of US right wing media.

According to the longtime *Vanity Fair* contributor, the attack poodles really came into their own after September 11, when the US press as a whole "unplugged and warehoused its bullshit detectors…becoming an accessory to the Bush agenda, its amplifier." Any voices of dissent, or even sober caution, were deemed un-American or even treasonous. By the time of the buildup to Gulf War 2, there was no place in the mainstream media "for pink-pantied appeasers in the steel cage death match between George (Texas Executioner) Bush and Sam (Butcher of Baghdad) Hussein."

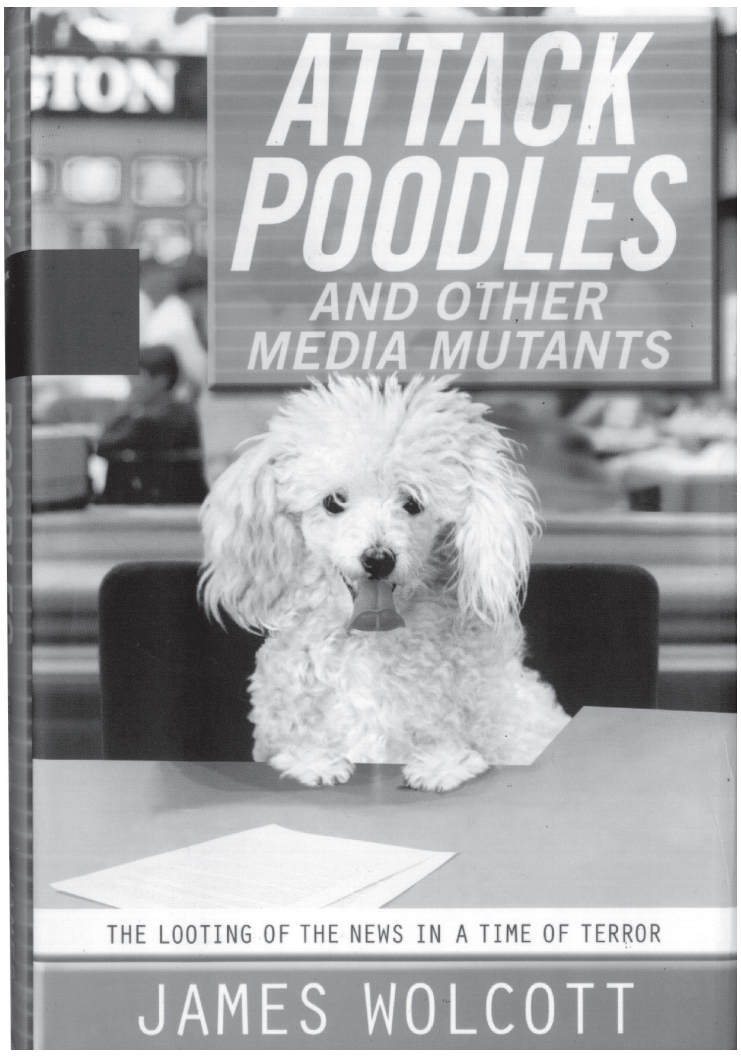
You may recall the recent media dustups between Fox News and Canadian news sources like *The Globe and Mail*, which had the temerity to question the "fair and balanced" tag of Rupert Murdoch's US-based broadcast network. In response, Fox witheringly described Globe television reviewer John Doyle as a "Canadian intellectual." Now there's an insult!

In his columns Doyle endorsed the idea that the Canadian cable airwaves should be opened up to Fox, in the belief that Canadians will find it hilarious, ridiculous fun. And while Wolcott doesn't address the Canadian angle in his book, the *Vanity Fair* contributor gives us every reason to be very, very, afraid of exposing ourselves to this broadcast equivalent of toxic sludge. We already have some US attack poodles in our midst – Dennis Miller, Robert Novak and his colleagues on CNN – but Fox represents the real deal, the slavering radical right hounds from hell.

Led by the apoplectic boyo Bill O' Reilly, Fox News is "building better morons the American way," says the author. Whether this is by design or default, Wolcott notes a study that determined how Americans' global misperceptions vary significantly depending on their news source. Those who got most of their news from Fox had significantly distorted ideas of reality, including the belief by a significant fraction of the viewing audience that Saddam not only had weapons of mass destruction, but used them on coalition forces.

There are some nice rewards for being a good doggie, accepting your biscuits from the White House and aiming your doodie on the papers of the supposedly liberal press. Wolcott notes that attack poodles "identify less with society's underdogs and more with the top dogs, being the top rovers of their own green pasture." They hang out with lobbyists, consultants, media executives, political aides and millionaire citizens.

Whose interests are they more likely to share, which cultural values are they going to endorse? Not likely those of channel-surfing Larry and Louise Lunchbucket. It's more likely the poodles will sniff butts and beg for treats at the black tie affairs of the military-industrial-entertainment cocktail circuit, lapping up the "slow status ballet of supertanker egos and fixed grins, each party a Tom Wolfe novella."



Each chapter of Wolcott's hilariously scabrous prose offers a quick biographical sketch of some of the most prominent among the attack poodles. Anne Coulter is the "Paris Hilton of post-modern politics, an elongated zero, a white hot sex symbol symbolizing nothing." Robert Novak, who outed Valerie Plame as a CIA agent in his syndicated column, "has long been a favourite Republican garbage chute." Fox's Sean Hannity "is an ideal mouthpiece for Fox News because he's the simulacrum of Fox News' ideal viewer: the middle-aged white man with the refillable, flip top head who's told what to think and repeats what he's been told in a brash voice, convinced he thunk it up himself." Canadian pundit David Frum, comes in for a well-deserved verbal beating: "Perhaps no speechwriter in the analysis of the profession has done as much destruction to rational discourse and international comity than this little wiggler, who history will rue as the author of the infamous phrase 'axis of evil' in Bush's 2002 state of the union address."

The author offers a priceless deconstruction of CNN's Dennis Miller, the comic-turned-jingoist formerly with *Saturday Night Live*. "His esoteric references are marbled into chunks of red meat flooding out to incite the worst prejudices and dumbest instincts of the studio audience, which whoops and hollers as if it were at a hootenanny. Hack your way through the hip convolutions and the sentiment that escapes is Kurtz's dying plea in *Heart of Darkness*, 'exterminate all the Bruins!' "

Dennis Miller's tragedy is that in his slavish endorsement of a bomb-dropping, cross-crazed president, he's tied his fortunes with those of Bush. "You can almost feel some cheap sympathy for him, had he not been so giddy at the prospect of playing court jester for a court of blood."

Although this is a book about the radical right kennel, Wolcott plays no favourites on the media's political spectrum. He hears the "pigeon coos of upscale liberalism" on National Public Radio, "where the women sound as if they they're making a clay pot on the turntable and the men sound as if they've gotten in touch with their feminine sides and can't leave it alone." But the book is far more than a collection of cleverly worded jabs and parries. There's a fierce moral intelligence clicking away behind Wolcott's prose. He even honours the behaviour of the few poodles who stray off obedience school grounds, such as Lou Dobbs' bulldog CNN reporting on corporate outsourcing of US jobs to Third World countries.

Attack Poodles was released before the November election, so its dark jollity takes on an ever-somber hue in retrospect of Bush's win. The world changed last November as much as it did on 9-11. Let's hope Wolcott's book doesn't end up on the Homeland Security's list of outlawed unembedded journalism.

Attack Poodles and Other Media Mutants *by James Wolcott, Miramax Books $33.95. Geoff Olson can be reached at gefo@telus.net*

What do we know?

UNIVERSE WITHIN

by Gwen Randall-Young

Few people are capable of expressing with equanimity opinions which differ from the prejudices of their social environment. Most people are even incapable of forming such opinions. – Albert Einstein

How hard can it be to think our own thoughts? After all, we are each individuals with minds of our own. But what do we really know, and how do we know? How do we glean our information about the world?

When I was a child, I remember repeating, as fact, ideas I had heard my parents expressing. For years they were my major source of information about the world and myself, so it was natural for me to assume that their political opinions were the correct ones. There was a sense of power in being in the know about such important things.

When the boy next door challenged my statements, his parents being of a different political persuasion, the obvious conclusion was that he, and they, were wrong. At least he and I went to the same school, so we could have something we could both be right about. Ours was the public school, and the one we passed on the way there was the Catholic school. Of course, we thought, it was better to be public than Catholic. So we could still play together and be smug about our place in the world.

That smugness was shattered one day when the boy who lived on the other side, and who attended the Catholic school, told me I would burn in hell because I was not Catholic. I had visions of God tossing me into a frying pan where I would shrivel up like burned bacon. I was no longer certain of my place in the world, and frankly, quite worried about where I would be after. A profound insecurity set in. I wanted to be on the right side, but I did not know which it was.

Things did not improve, for next came the Cuban missile crisis. Again, I thought I was on the right side because whatever side we are on, has to be the right side. Right as we might be, I did not like the model bomb shelters on display at the mall, or the air raid sirens that were being erected throughout the city.

Despite an undergraduate degree in political science, I never did find out what, or who, was right. I learned that there are ideas, and there are people. People act according to their ideas, and we can agree or disagree with their beliefs or actions. I saw that ideas can become beliefs, and beliefs can come to be regarded as truths. Politics, it seemed to me, was about conflicting ideas about what was right, and true. I also discovered that I was not all that political.

I then delved into graduate work in psychology. I learned a lot about the science of human development, learning and behaviour. In the study of psychology distinctions are not made on the basis of race, culture or political orientation. We look at how humans as a species develop and function. In this area, there are more similarities than differences.

The psychology that I studied made little, if any mention of the human soul. Nor did it consider the human as part of the interconnected whole that is our universe. Now, I was on my own. Since then, my study has been an exploration of the human spirit, and how Spirit manifests in each of us. My focus has been the soul. The soul, of course, is not political. That is the territory of ego.

How do we speak of soulful things in the political arena?

How do we speak of soulful things in the political arena? How do we express "with equanimity" ideas that are so different from the talk of the day? Most of the "knowledge" about what is happening in the world is information gleaned from the media. Most of what is taken as fact is what is written and promulgated by "our side." Of course it is the truth. The minute we choose a side we have joined into the polarity process. Our children grow up thinking that what they see on CNN is what is true in the world. Polarity sparks interest, and makes news. Peaceful co-existence does not sell advertising minutes.

In our culture, one is expected to have "informed opinions" about what is going on in the world. Yet, as Bertrand Russell said, "The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, but wiser people so full of doubts."

The tsunami showed us what happens when we transcend the political. What a wake-up call. Slowly the world drifts back to sleep, waking to ingest the "processed political food" served up by the media, when we could be feasting on the organic wholeness of our interconnectedness. It is time to take a step back – far enough back that we can see the polarities, and the space beyond them. Then we must use our wisdom to figure out how to explore and occupy that space, for in it there are no borders, no separate territories and there is room for all.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice and a feature columnist for Common Ground *magazine. Her books, tapes and CDs are available at www.gwen.ca, or contact her at gwendall@shaw.ca. They may also be ordered through Banyen Books.*

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Freeing yourself from your mind

by Eckhart Tolle

What exactly do you mean by "watching the thinker"?

When someone goes to the doctor and says, "I hear a voice in my head," he or she will most likely be sent to a psychiatrist. The fact is that, in a very similar way, virtually everyone hears a voice, or several voices, in their head all the time: the involuntary thought processes that you don't realize you have the power to stop. Continuous monologues or dialogues.

You have probably come across "mad" people in the street incessantly talking or muttering to themselves. Well, that's not much different from what you and all other "normal" people do, except that you don't do it out loud. The voice comments, speculates, judges, compares, complains, likes, dislikes, and so on. The voice isn't necessarily relevant to the situation you find yourself in at the time; it may be reviving the recent or distant past or rehearsing or imagining possible future situations. Here it often imagines things going wrong and negative outcomes; this is called worry.

Sometimes this soundtrack is accompanied by visual images or "mental movies." Even if the voice is relevant to the situation at hand, it will interpret it in terms of the past. This is because the voice belongs to your conditioned mind, which is the result of all your past history as well as of the collective cultural mind-set you inherited. So you see and judge the present through the eyes of the past and get a totally distorted view of it. It is not uncommon for the voice to be a person's own worst enemy. Many people live with a tormentor in their head that continuously attacks and punishes them and drains them of vital energy. It is the cause of untold misery and unhappiness, as well as of disease.

This is the beginning of your natural state of felt oneness with Being

The good news is that you can free yourself from your mind. This is the only true liberation. You can take the first step right now. Start listening to the voice in your head as often as you can. Pay particular attention to any repetitive thought patterns, those old gramophone records that have been playing in your head perhaps for many years. This is what I mean by "watching the thinker," which is another way of saying: listen to the voice in your head, be there as the witnessing presence.

When you listen to that voice, listen to it impartially. That is to say, do not judge. Do not judge or condemn what you hear, for doing so would mean that the same voice has come in again through the back door. You'll soon realize: there is the voice, and here I am listening to it, watching it. This I am realization, this sense of your own presence, is not a thought. It arises from beyond the mind.

~

So when you listen to a thought, you are aware not only of the thought but also of yourself as the witness of the thought. A new dimension of consciousness has come in. As you listen to the thought, you feel a conscious presence – your deeper self – behind or underneath the thought, as it were. The thought then loses its power over you and quickly subsides, because you are no longer energizing the mind through identification with it. This is the beginning of the end of involuntary and compulsive thinking.

When a thought subsides, you experience a discontinuity in the mental stream – a gap of "no-mind." At first, the gaps will be short, a few seconds perhaps, but gradually they will become longer. When these gaps occur, you feel a certain stillness and peace inside you. This is the beginning of your natural state of felt oneness with Being, which is usually obscured by the mind. With practice, the sense of stillness and peace will deepen. In fact, there is no end to its depth. You will also feel a subtle emanation of joy arising from deep within: the joy of Being.

It is not a trancelike state. Not at all. There is no loss of consciousness here. The opposite is the case. If the price of peace were a lowering of your consciousness, and the price of stillness a lack of vitality and alertness, then they would not be worth having. In this state of inner connectedness, you are much more alert, more awake than in the mind-identified state. You are fully present. It also raises the vibrational frequency of the energy field that gives life to the physical body.

As you go more deeply into this realm of no-mind, as it is sometimes called in the East, you realize the state of pure consciousness. In that state, you feel your own presence with such intensity and such joy that all thinking, all emotions, your physical body, as well as the whole external world become relatively insignificant in comparison to it. And yet this is not a selfish but a selfless state. It takes you beyond what you previously thought of as "your self." That presence is essentially you and at the same time inconceivably greater than you. What I am trying to convey here may sound paradoxical or even contradictory, but there is no other way that I can express it.

Excerpted from The Power of Now *by Eckhart Tolle, $14 US, $15.75 Canada, trade paperback, published by New World Library and Namaste Publishing www.newworldlibrary.com or www.namastepublishing.com. Also available at local and online bookstores.*

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Mercury fillings the enemy within

by Joan Ullyett, BA, RHN

At some point in our lives, usually starting in childhood, many of us developed cavities in our teeth that needed to be filled. As children we naturally trusted that our parents knew best when they sent us to the dentist to have our cavities taken care of, and our parents in turn trusted that the dentist was doing what was right and necessary.

The fact that the fillings, known as mercury amalgam, were comprised of 50 percent mercury, a potent neurotoxin, never seemed to be an issue. The fillings were safe, inquiring parents were told, in their amalgam state, where the mercury is combined with copper, tin and silver.

Curiously, mercury is considered a dangerous poison when outside our mouths, so much so that dentists will not touch amalgam with gloved hands, yet somehow it is completely safe when in our mouths. Or so we were told.

Mercury amalgam was introduced to North America in the early 1800s from Europe and used for a short period of time, but in the 1840s North American dentistry turned away from its use largely due to concerns about the toxic nature of mercury. In fact, as a requirement of membership in the American Society of Dental Surgeons, members had to sign a document that stated they would not use mercury amalgam in their practice. However, this progressive, health-oriented stance was to be short-lived. In 1859 the organization now known as the American Dental Association was formed and chose to endorse the use of mercury amalgam, declaring it safe for use in the human body. This puzzling about-turn became less so when it was revealed some years later that some members of the ADA held patents on the mercury amalgam "recipe."

Thus, in the last century and a half, due to the widespread acceptance and use of mercury amalgams, a massive experiment of sorts has been underway; that is, how does long term mercury exposure affect the human body? No one has ever actually agreed to be part of this experiment, but nevertheless it continues. In the mid 1970s the US Federal Drug Administration (now the US Food and Drug Administration) reaffirmed the safety of amalgam fillings by categorizing them as "generally recognized as safe," largely because they had been in use for over a century.

However, this confidence in their safety was shaken when research began to surface in the 1980s showing that mercury vapour is released from amalgam fillings each time an individual chews, drinks hot liquids or brushes amalgam-filled teeth. This disturbing evidence was given more weight when human autopsies revealed that there was a direct relationship between the mercury content in brain and kidney tissue and the mercury content in teeth. Could our trusted childhood dentist have been wrong all these years?

In mercury toxicity the symptoms are multiple and many can also be classified as symptoms of other health problems or diseases. This, coupled with the fact that both the Canadian and US dental associations still refuse to state that mercury amalgams are dangerous to human health, is no doubt resulting in the misdiagnosis of many people who are suffering from mercury poisoning and who sadly may never actually receive appropriate treatment because of this. Some of the most common symptoms of mercury poisoning are: fatigue, dizziness, depression, headaches, digestive problems, skin rashes, fine tremors, vision problems, hair loss, chronic yeast infections (i.e. vaginal, athlete's foot, nail fungus, jock itch), under-active thyroid, memory loss, anxiety, angry outbursts, heartbeat irregularities, multiple sclerosis and immune system disorders. It is still unclear as to why some individuals with mercury amalgam fillings never develop any obvious symptoms of toxicity while others develop symptoms as early as their teens. One theory is that some people's bodies are better at excreting mercury on an ongoing basis, while others seem to reach a saturation point where they begin to exhibit symptoms.

in the 1840s North American dentistry turned away from its use largely due to concerns about the toxic nature of mercury...the American Society of Dental Surgeons members had to sign a document that stated they would not use mercury amalgam

If you are among the thousands of Canadians who have mercury fillings and some of the above symptoms, what can you do? Ideally, your first step is to have a hair or urine analysis done to assess your body burden of mercury. This can be done through a medical doctor, however, if you encounter resistance a naturopathic doctor can assist you with this.

If you choose to have your amalgams removed and replaced with safer material (usually composite resin) it is vitally important that you have this done by a biological dentist, as they will use the proper holistic protocols to minimize your mercury exposure during the procedure. Unlike in years past, many extended

continued on page 32

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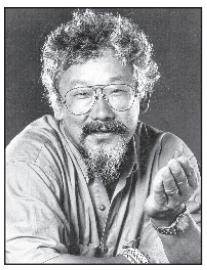

Diversity creates stability and security

SCIENCE MATTERS

by David Suzuki

In the late 1950s, geneticists began to analyze individual genes in plants, fruit flies and mice. Instead of finding genetic homogeneity or uniformity within such specialized species, scientists discovered that genes controlling specific proteins existed in many different forms. This phenomenon is called "genetic polymorphism" and we now recognize such variability is characteristic of vibrant, vigorous species. But diversity is actually important on many levels.

Over the 3.8 billion years that life has existed on Earth, there have been enormous changes – the sun has increased intensity by 30 percent; the atmosphere has changed from CO_2-rich to high oxygen content; mountains and oceans arose and disappeared; warm periods have punctuated ice ages – yet all the while, life has flourished. The key to that persistence has been diversity at the gene, species and ecosystem levels within the biosphere.

As conditions change, the "pool" of variability provides more options for adaptation to the new environment. We've learned from experience in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, that monoculture (the widespread growth of a single species or genetic strain) creates vulnerability to new diseases, pests or environmental conditions. Human beings have evolved another level of diversity – culture – which has enabled us to flourish in diverse surroundings like the arctic, deserts, mountains and tropical forests.

Unfortunately, globalization and the advancement of a single world economic model have created conditions that discourage diversity and encourage homogeneity in order to create favourable economies of scale. In other words, a Wal-mart is a Wal-mart is a Wal-mart. This has the effect of homogenizing the local cultures and diversity that might otherwise help provide resilience as conditions around us change. And this is why it is vital to encourage diversity within and between human societies – to maintain different worldviews and ways of thinking.

When the Iron Curtain fell, for example, we learned that Soviet secrecy and isolation resulted in different approaches to problems. As we reported on The Nature of Things, one technique involved surgical alterations of the cornea that have since been adapted as laser eye surgery. The Soviets also developed an immense boat-plane that skims just above water surfaces and is based on very different principles of lift and drag from conventional aircraft. And Soviet scientists exploited phage viruses that infect and kill specific bacteria as a way to fight disease. These developments are a reflection of original approaches and applications.

Today, four fifths of Cuban agriculture is organic and producers are working towards 100 percent.

I recently visited Cuba, a nation that has been deliberately blocked from the global economy by the US, and saw enough to know Cubans have much to teach us. The Soviet collapse suddenly deprived Cuba of its main market for sugar and its source of cheap oil. Pesticides, fertilizers and big farm machinery became prohibitively expensive. It was a catastrophic economic crisis which necessitated new solutions. Today, four fifths of Cuban agriculture is organic and producers are working towards 100 percent. Vacant lots, and yards now grow food so that today, 80 percent of leafy (non-grain) vegetables are grown and consumed within cities and towns.

I visited an urban garden of three hectares in Havana which was started by four people in 1999 and now supports 76 paid workers who all live nearby. They grow worms to provide fertilizer for the soil, insects and bacteria to control pests and plant species to attract pests or support insects that prey on pests. Human muscle are the primary source of energy to tend the crops, yet yields per hectare are as high as industrial scale agriculture. Local people buy the produce (which is fresher, varied and free of chemicals), dozens of people are fully employed, the environment is cleaner and people develop a deeper appreciation of their relationship with food. By criteria of literacy, medical care, infant mortality, extreme poverty and homelessness, the United Nations rates Cuba as a developed nation. This, from a country that is in many ways cut off from the outside world.

As human population swells and our climate changes in the 21st century, we will encounter the limits of the resources our planet is capable of supplying. If we are to feed humanity and provide a high quality of life for our people we should try to protect diversity at every level now, because we are going to need all the help we can get.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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Lessons from the trenches of life

EARTHFUTURE.COM

by Guy Dauncey

What makes for success in life, love, and leadership? Everyone has different experiences, and different lessons they can share. Here are some of mine, gathered mostly from my working life as a self-employed person.

Being you

1. Offer yourself in service to the Earth or Spirit every day, and ask for insight, guidance and support.

2. Seek your inner enthusiasm and then follow it. Don't seek permission; jump right in. Enthusiasm comes from the Greek en-theos "the god within." Allow yourself to fly.

3. Be guided by your vision, not by your reactions to things you dislike. Visualize the result you wish for. All success begins in the mind, and shows up later in the physical dimension.

4. Think ahead of the problem you want to address, and seek a solution at a level higher. Invent the future; pull it out of thin air. Be creative. Feel free to invent new ideas, projects and initiatives.

5. Trust your intuitions. If you get an inspiration and want to try something unusual, do it.

6. Timing is key. Opportunities come, then slip away again.

7. Take the time to read good books in the area you're working on. They're often a source of inspiration. And listen to music, too.

8. If you feel confused, take time and seek your centre. Go to a place you consider special, whether in nature or wherever, and ask for guidance.

9. Don't seek after happiness. If you offer your life in service to your greatest source of love (and not the human kind), happiness will come and sit on your shoulder like a bird.

10. Know when to be silent, as well as when to talk.

Being organized

11. Treat every letter, email or phone call as if the person is, or could become, a friend.

12. Create a list of your year's goals and priority projects, and give them approximate timelines.

13. Create a weekly to-do list, including phone numbers for people to be called.

14. Create a daily to-do list, and priorize your actions. Some prefer to do big tasks first, some small.

15. Create a folder or notebook where you can keep notes for each project; but don't drown in notes, especially in a meeting. Priorize listening, and relationships.

16. Don't drown in emails: they will consume your day. Try to answer those on the same topic at the same time.

17. Invest time in research. There are no shortcuts. Good research is invaluable, and lends power to knowledge. Create a good filing system, so that everything is easy to access and up to date.

18. Keep all commitments; be on time. Phone in advance if you're going to be late or cancel.

19. In new situations, listen and then listen some more, until you have a grasp of the situation and can contribute with useful suggestions.

20. A clear project has clear energy. If a project feels blocked, pause and reassess what's happening.

Being kind

21. In a group project, seek to involve other people as much as possible. The world is full of people who are looking for purpose, and a way to contribute.

22. Tune into your close co-operants. Find ways in which they can play to their strengths, as part of a team. Find ways to reward and acknowledge. Time invested in a phone call is 10 times better than a single email.

23. Accept criticism wisely, even if it hurts. Be happy to say "oops!" if you make an error, and accept full responsibility.

24. If negative energy comes your way, say hello and let it pass straight through. If it comes persistently, take time to ask the person what's up, and clear away possible misunderstandings.

25. Where possible, don't do business with people you don't feel good about. Steer a path around them.

26. If someone is becoming emotional, listen with your heart, not with your brain.

27. In meetings and workshops where you are the leader, take time to connect with each person. Always make space for introduction of new people. Prepare a space before people meet in it. Set a positive energy.

28. Carry your sense of humour wherever you go. Remember the fifth law of sustainability: "If it's not fun, it's not sustainable!"

29. Above all else, be kind. The world is full of grief and sorrow, and longing for love.

30. Be grateful for all.

Guy Dauncey is president of the BC Sustainable Energy Association www.bcsea.org, and author of several books, including Earthfuture: Stories From a Sustainable World *(New Society Publishers). He lives in Victoria. www.earthfuture.com*

BC Liberals stalling on wind power

by Arne Hansen

BC stands to lose major investment dollars, jobs and significant federal government subsidies if the provincial government doesn't commit soon to accepting more wind-generated energy into the provincial grid.

Vestas, the world's largest manufacturer of wind turbines, has approached the BC government with an offer to invest approximately $30 million to build a major wind turbine plant in Squamish. The project would generate 125 to 185 direct jobs in a community hard hit by the loss of BC Rail jobs. But the BC government is stalling on the deal.

...agreeing to purchase 1,450 MW of wind power would help bring sustainable development and good, green jobs to at least two regions of BC that really need it: Squamish and the North Island.

"It's a no-brainer," says the BC Green Party's Adriane Carr. "Climate change is now the biggest global issue. Here we have the chance to do our bit to meet Canada's Kyoto obligations by shifting to clean, green energy and at the same time garner lots of money and jobs. It's either sheer incompetence or short-sighted favouritism for fossil fuels on the part of the BC Liberals if they don't say 'yes' to this wind energy deal now," says Carr.

A letter dated December 16, 2004 from Vestas to the BC Minister of Energy and Mines requests a meeting and warns that it has other investment avenues and must get a government decision soon. To secure its investment Vestas asked the BC government to commit to purchasing 1,000 MW of wind power. In a separate deal a 450 MW wind energy project by Sea Breeze on northern Vancouver Island is ready to go except for BC Hydro agreeing to purchase the power.

The government agreeing to purchase 1,450 MW of wind power would help bring sustainable development and good, green jobs to at least two regions of BC that really need it: Squamish and the North Island.

In addition, the federal government has an offer on the table to all provinces to subsidize up to 4,000 MW of new wind power to the tune of about one cent per kilowatt hour. Quebec has leapt on this offer with a guarantee to produce 2,000 MW of wind power and other provinces are moving fast. If BC doesn't make a decision very soon we stand to lose millions of dollars. The federal subsidy for 1,000 MW of wind power is $87 million a year.

Despite the commitment in its energy plan to target 50 percent of BC's new energy production as "clean and green," the BC government's energy arm, BC Hydro, has accepted only one wind power project, a proposal by Stothart Energy to build a small wind farm near Holberg on northern Vancouver Island.

The BC government should commit to purchasing the 1,000 MW of wind power needed to secure the Vestas project and get going on the Sea Breeze wind project. It should purchase the power at the $0.07 rate it offered the proponents of the Duke Point gas-fired plant near Nanaimo, cancel the Duke Point deal and put BC on a profitable and healthy green energy path.

Gerry Furney, mayor of Port McNeil; Ian Sutherland, mayor of Squamish; and Bill Shepard, chair of the Mount Waddington Regional District all support these power deals and are waiting for positive action on the part of the BC government. It's time that BC catches up and gets on board with Kyoto and green energy.

Writer and film maker Arne Hansen can be reached at editor@commonground.ca

Buffy Sainte-Marie's magic is alive

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER INDUCTED TO HALL OF FAME

by Joseph Roberts

Joseph Roberts: Common Ground has a new arts and entertainment section dedicated to raising awareness and empowering people. I feel you're doing that.

Buffy Sainte-Marie: I just got back from touring in Manitoba with the Cradleboard Teaching project, and then Toronto and Ottawa. In Toronto we had a big gala when *Universal Soldier* was inducted into The Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame. It was broadcast on CBC.

JR *Universal Soldier* is just as timely today as when you wrote it.

BSM Yes, unfortunately.

JR For the past 28 years you've been working with the Nihewan Foundation.

BSM I started the foundation a lot longer ago than that. We started it in 1968 and it became a reality in '69.

JR What does the word Ni-he-wan mean?

BSM It means "talk Cree", but it implies "Be your culture".

JR I remember listening to *God Is Alive and Magic Is Afoot* a long time ago and want to thank you for putting out that message.

BSM I re-recorded that on the album of *Up Where We Belong* which is a collection of new songs and all the songs that are most requested in concert. We've used that song in the video concert I did for CBC, also called *Up Where We Belong*. We got a Gemini for it.

JR And you've worked with UNESCO on a school project in Canada.

BSM Melinda Barnes is the spokesperson for that. It's really their project.

JR I'm curious about your degree in Oriental philosophy.

BSM When I entered college I thought I'd be a veterinarian and I do love animals, but in the process of settling in as a student I'd always been interested in people's relationships with the Creator, so my study in world religion kind of focused down to oriental philosophy. So at the University of Massachusetts I majored in that at the same time as getting my teaching degree.

JR Was that prior to *God is Alive*?

BSM Oh, much before. That was when I was in college in 1959.

JR When did you first pick up a guitar and feel it was more amazing than you imagined.

BSM I probably was about 15 and in high school. I'd played piano up until then, anything else I could get my hands on, so I got my first guitar as a teenager which was great for me because I was very shy and it was portable. So I could take it anywhere I wanted to go and just enjoy songwriting by myself. It came very easily.

JR I've fallen in love with the guitar again.

BSM I just got a new Godin and I like it very much. It's a steel string, but it has a very beautiful easy fingerboard.

JR When you write a song do you do the words first or the music?

BSM Very often at the same time, but it varies.

JR How would you describe the feeling when you know something is coming through you?

BSM It's a little bit like dreaming. I guess I don't have words for that. It's funny, because the feeling itself is very non-verbal and similar to what I get with animals when you just kind of shut off your conscious verbal processes and be a part of the moment, kind of shut up and listen.

JR Do you feel expansion or a sense of connectedness?

BSM I don't know. It's kind of like a radio is turned on in my head. I have no idea where it comes from. There's another side to my writing that's very well thought-out and very deliberate. I'll get an idea for a song and kind of hear this thing in my head.

If I get fascinated enough and it's a topical song like *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* or *Universal Soldier* I'll just work on it, because I have a goal at that point. Then it becomes quite deliberate and almost like writing a college thesis because I have a goal to present it to other people who might not have thought of it in that way. Then I know I only have three minutes to make, in some cases, a very new point, even if it's something as old as what Universal Soldier is about - everybody being responsible for the war.

JR I saw your concert on Salt Spring Island.

BSM That was a fun one. It's also a very, very nice place to stay. I also remember someone coming in wearing a beautiful calico shirt that I liked so much he gave it to me.

JR What's closest to your heart these days?

BSM My animals. I have a really close relationship with horses, and a herd of goats and cats and dogs and family. So my home front, of course. But also the Cradleboard Teaching Project. I just spent a couple of weeks in northern Manitoba and Winnipeg. The ministers of education and heritage are really supportive of the project, so I was just in Norway House teaching teachers how to participate and stay involved.

JR Tell us about your painting.

BSM Well, I was the first person to do big scale digital paintings to appear in galleries and museums. The paintings being exhibited now were started in 1988.

JR I see your self-portrait in the red background on your website.

BSM There are a lot of other paintings on the site.

JR You will be in Vancouver March 13 at the Talking Stick Festival. Does that tie in with other work you're doing?

BSM In a way it does. Ulali is going to be there as well, you know. Don't miss them, they're magnificent. I'm also doing a workshop on the 14th but we haven't decided yet if it's going to be a Cradleboard workshop or a music workshop or what. But I'll be at the Chan Centre both days. I love it there.

All photos © Buffy Sainte-Marie

Buffy's story

FROM UNIVERSAL SOLDIER TO ROCKING THE CRADLE PROJECT

Buffy Sainte-Marie was a graduating college senior in 1962 and hit the ground running in the early sixties, after the beatniks and before the hippies. All alone she toured North America's colleges, reservations and concert halls, meeting both huge acclaim and huge misperception from audiences and record companies who expected Pocahontas in fringes, and instead were both entertained and educated with their initial dose of Native North American reality in the first person.

By age 24, Buffy Sainte-Marie had appeared all over Europe, Canada, Australia and Asia, receiving honors, medals and awards which continue to this day. Her song *Until It's Time for You to Go* was recorded by Elvis and Barbra and Cher, and her *Universal Soldier* became the anthem of the peace movement. For her very first album she was voted Billboard's best new artist.

She disappeared suddenly from the mainstream airwaves during the Lyndon Johnson years. As part of a blacklist, which affected Eartha Kitt, Taj Mahal and a host of other outspoken performers, her name was included on White House stationery as among those whose music "deserved to be suppressed." In Indian country and abroad, however, her fame only grew. She continued to appear at countless grassroots concerts, AIM events and other activist benefits. She made 17 albums of her music, three of her own television specials, spent five years on *Sesame Street*, scored movies, helped to found Canada's Music of Aboriginal Canada Juno category, raised a son, earned a PhD in fine arts, taught digital music as adjunct professor at several colleges, and won an Academy Award Oscar for the song *Up Where We Belong*.

Buffy Sainte-Marie virtually invented the role of Native North American international activist pop star. Her concern for protecting indigenous intellectual property, and her distaste for the exploitation of Native American artists and performers has kept her in the forefront of activism in the arts for forty years. Presently she operates the Nihewan Foundation for Native American Education whose Cradleboard Teaching Project serves children and teachers in eighteen states.

Deeper background about Buffy

Born on a Cree reservation in Qu'Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan, Buffy Sainte-Marie was adopted and raised in Maine and Massachusetts. She received a PhD in fine art from the University of Massachusetts. She also holds degrees in both Oriental philosophy and teaching, influences which form the backbone of her music, visual art and social activism.

As a college student in the early 1960s, Buffy Sainte-Marie became known as a writer of protest songs and love songs. Many of these became huge hits and classics of the era, performed by hundreds of other artists including Barbra Streisand, Elvis Presley, Chet Atkins, Janis Joplin, Roberta Flack, Neil Diamond, Tracy Chapman and The Boston Pops Orchestra.

Buffy had a unique career in the USA, Europe, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and Japan. She wrote songs and essays, established a scholarship foundation to fund Native American study, spent time with indigenous people in far away countries, received a medal from Queen Elizabeth II and presented a colloquium to Europe's philosophers.

In 1976 she quit recording to be a mommy and an artist, and to continue as a student of experimental music. Buffy and her son Dakota Starblanket Wolfchild became well known for their five-year stint on *Sesame Street*, where they taught us that "Indians still exist." As a composer, she won an Academy Award in 1982 for the song *Up Where We Belong* as recorded by Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes for the film *An Officer and a Gentleman*.

With Dakota grown up, Buffy reentered the music scene in 1993 with her comeback album *Coincidence and Likely Stories* (EMI).

Her art and music are also teaching tools, and she uses these continually to enlighten.

An educator before she was ever known as a singer, Buffy lectures at colleges and civic venues on a wide variety of topics. She serves as adjunct professor in Canada at York University in Toronto and Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Regina, and in the US was an Evans Chair scholar at the Evergreen State College in Washington State. She has also taught at the Institute for American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

An early Macintosh pioneer in digital art and music, Buffy Sainte-Marie's works were among the first to be seen in museums and galleries across North America. She likens electronic painting to "painting with light." Working on her Macintosh at home, using mainly Photoshop software, she combines colours and light, sometimes with scanned-in realities (photos, fabrics, feathers and beads to create huge, brilliantly coloured paintings, which she describes as being "both reflective and deep, like new car paint". Her works have graced the covers of *Art Focus* and *Talking Stick* magazines and been featured in *MS* magazine and *USA Today*.

As digital media caught on, Buffy assisted many other artists in understanding computers as an additional tool for real art. She was keynote speaker at the Interactive '96 conference in Toronto, where tangible versions of her artwork were exhibited amidst great media attention. Singing a concert with the Regina Symphony with her magnificent huge digital paintings exhibited in the foyer of the concert hall, her continuing theme Cyberskins: Live and Interactive crosses media boundaries but always emphasizes how Indians are alive and thriving even within the digital revolution.

In February 1996, Buffy released her latest album *Up Where We Belong* (EMI), a collection of new songs with new recordings of her best songs. She was recently awarded the Award for Lifetime Musical Achievement by the First Americans in the Arts, who also paid homage to Buffy and her legendary career by naming the award after her.

Since 1996 she has limited her concert appearances to about 20 per year, speaking engagements to about the same number, and focused her time mostly on the Cradleboard Teaching Project, using her multimedia skills to create accurate, enriching core curriculum based in Native American cultural perspectives. The interactive multimedia CD-ROM *Science: Through Native American Eyes* features Buffy on camera as well as producer and director. Visit www.cradleboard.org to learn more.

Buffy Sainte-Marie's work is a reflection of her own life – extremely varied and unique – and her special skill is in joining seemingly unrelated ideas: A pacifist and a general. Indians and computers. Electronic art and Native realities.

In February 2005 Buffy's song *Universal Soldier* was inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame.

continued on page 30

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Paying fair prices for food

THE ORGANIC WAY

by Marya Skrypiczajko

I often wonder why in North America we are so disconnected from food and its origins, the pleasures it offers and its true value. In BC we spend approximately 10 percent of our disposable income on food, compare that with Europeans who spend 25 percent and third world citizens who spend more than 50 percent of their disposable income on food and it seems we undervalue both farmers and what we are eating.

In fact, many farmers, organic and conventional alike, are not getting fair wages for their work. Talking to organic farmers around the province, I discovered that those who have large single crop farms can do well, as can those who export to Japan and Europe, but that many small-scale farmers find it challenging to get a realistic price for the food they grow. Some even claim to lose money on certain crops.

Food prices are determined on the North American market; not on a local level, nor by the true costs of the time and money that goes into production. Prices in BC are generally determined by those in the US where the growing season is longer, where there are more large-scale farms, and where there is much low-paid illegal immigrant labour. As well, prices for conventionally-grown grain, dairy products and meat are kept unrealistically low by way of government subsidies to those farmers. There are only a few rare programs in Canada that subsidize organic growers, yet organic prices are linked to conventional food prices because consumers are only willing to pay a certain percentage more for organic than conventional food.

We need to have a lifetime of eating healthy food to protect our bodies from disease.

It is fair that organic prices are higher than conventional prices given that so much more time goes into organic food production and because organic farmers do not benefit from government subsidies. But how much higher should organic prices be? If they are too high then lower income earners are completely cut off from being able to buy organic food. The organic food movement is not about catering to a niche market of only well-off people; it is about creating the healthiest food possible in the gentlest way possible.

We have to get used to spending a higher percentage of our earnings on food and hope the government will one day subsidize lower-income earners' food expenditures.

The importance of good quality food is up there with clean air and water. We must realize that fresh organic food is not just good for us while we are eating it, but that it has long-term effects on our health and the health of the soil. We need to have a lifetime of eating healthy food to protect our bodies from disease.

In the past, it has been government policy for food to be inexpensive. This has created a pattern of thinking that food should be cheap. But we have always accepted vehicles, fashions and entertainment to be expensive and so we are conditioned to pay a lot for these pleasures. We live in a culture that does not respect the work of farmers and, in general, does not feel they deserve a fair income for their work.

There has been a lack of public education on the incredible nutritional value of fresh, organic food. People obviously feel they are not getting what they need from food if they are buying vitamins on a weekly basis. When I was researching an organic food guide to BC recently, I found that there are more vitamin stores in BC than organic food stores. Approximately two thirds of North Americans are overweight. Both the Canadian and US governments are studying this problem and looking for solutions. It seems we are short-term thinkers when it comes to food; we think about how much the bag of groceries will cost at the moment of purchase, how simply we can get food into our bodies and how much we love fat and sugar.

The anomaly is fair trade foods such as coffee, chocolate and tea for which we are willing to pay higher prices. It is ironic because these are not the foods we need to live healthy lives. It is completely fair that these farmers are given decent wages for their work and respectable working conditions. But then why do we not want the same for our farmers? I think it goes back to education. There has been a lot of publicity regarding the value of fair trade products.

While there is more and more positive publicity for organic food, there is still an ingrained belief that a plate of lentils and potatoes, a bag of apples or a cheese sandwich should not cost more than a couple bucks. So what can we do? Buy local, buy organic, buy directly from the farmer or the baker and remember the true value of food.

Marya Skrypiczajko is the author of BC the Organic Way – Where to Find Organic Food in British Columbia. *www.bctheorganicway.com*

Organic, simple and healthful

NUTRISPEAK

by Vesanto Melina MS, RD

Organic eating has gone mainstream. Responding to consumer demand, supermarkets now feature centrally placed organic produce sections. Over the past decade, the organic food industry has increased at 20 percent per year. What drives this growing support for organic food? Not surprisingly, savvy consumers figure that if a whiff of insecticides can kill bugs dead, these chemicals aren't going to do us a whole lot of good. After all, our cells respond to poisons in the same general manner. And toxic herbicides aren't that appealing either, even if there's just a trace left at harvest time.

Yet to put things in perspective, the use of pesticides for agricultural purposes has been a common practice for just half a century. Prior to the 1950s, organic farming was the normal system of food production. The pesticide industry and the chemical warfare industry grew together as siblings; the research that supports these fields has much in common. Many pesticides were registered long before extensive studies established links to cancer and other diseases and the sometimes-tragic effects on farm workers became known. The list of permitted chemicals varies markedly from country to country.

According to a 1993 National Academy of Sciences study Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children, pesticide regulation is outdated and flawed. The risk assessment that has been done is based on adult consumption of one pesticide at a time or on animal studies. Yet the concentration of chemicals in the body of a rapidly growing child is likely to create a different and possibly higher risk. Furthermore, we have no idea of the possible effects of ingestion and interaction of a mixture of dozens of these substances over a lifetime.

Are there further advantages to choosing organic produce? Consumers report that it tastes better. What factors contribute to the development of a flavourful tomato or a luscious strawberry? Sunlight, clean water and soil with the full spectrum of minerals and essential nutrients are high on the list. Organic farmers keep their soils balanced and well fed through proper tillage, crop rotation and the use of beneficial pests and predators. A 2004 study showed organic tomatoes to have more vitamin C and protective substances known as carotenoids. Canadians also like the fact that organic foods are not genetically modified. Eating low on the food chain, we avoid the toxins that accumulate in animal fats.

An easy way to boost your intake of organic produce is to arrange for weekly delivery. Choose from seven services in the Lower Mainland: Ladybug Organics, SPUD, Organics at Home, Green Earth, Blue Moon and Organics Delivery BC. Farm markets are also great places to get organic produce in season. On a warm spring day, explore the possibilities at Yaletown, Granville Island or Trout Lake. For a full listing of locations and services, check out the Farm Folk City Folk website at www.ffcf.bc.ca

World's greatest greens

Kale and collards are great calcium sources, but we may be at a loss about how to prepare them. Here's a solution from Becoming Vegetarian (V. Melina and B. Davis, 2003) that is so delicious that it's practically addictive. A 3/4-cup serving provides more well absorbed calcium than a cup of milk. At our March 5 Langley workshop Living Without Dairy: Great Food, Smart Nutrition, we'll make many such recipes (604-882-6782 or 604-888-8325).

12 cups (2 pounds) kale or collard greens
1-2 tbsp. olive oil
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 tsp. paprika
2 tsp. cumin
3 cups parsley, cilantro, or a mixture, chopped
1/2 tsp. tamari (or to taste)
1 lemon, cut in wedges (or 2 tsp. lemon juice)

Remove stems from kale or collards; chop in strips about one inch wide. Place greens in a steamer, cook until soft and drain well. In preheated frying pan, combine oil, garlic, cumin and paprika; cook over medium heat for 1-2 minutes, without letting garlic get too brown. Add parsley, steamed greens and tamari; stir to distribute seasonings. Serve with wedges of fresh lemon or sprinkled lemon juice.

Makes three cups (four servings).

Vesanto Melina is a dietitian, author and consultant; see www.nutrispeak.com.

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Confidence

SIMPLY WOMAN!

by Crystal Andrus

We frequently live our lives in pleasing mode, trying to impress our in-laws, amaze our boss, have the perfect house, and do our children's school projects; but often we do all this only because we care too much what people think.

Of course, we need to be politically correct at times, gracious at others, and occasionally grin-and-bear it diplomatically when our mother-in-law corrects our parenting. However, we certainly do not have to be so fragile and sensitive about what other people think about us.

This self-destructive need for approval only disappears when we begin approving of ourselves, and that can only happen after we face our greatest fears and truths. We've all heard the saying "the truth will set you free." Truth opens the door to authenticity. Authenticity is the secret ingredient to living with inner peace and self-love.

The first step to living your authentic life is accepting that you are not responsible for someone else's hurtful or neglectful behaviour, but you are accountable for your reaction to it and how you allow it to affect your life. You are responsible for your emotions whether they are negative ones such as envy or insecurity or positive ones like compassion and understanding.

The next time you feel slighted by someone close to you, ask yourself "is this my issue or theirs?" If you truly know this isn't your issue (because you've really done the work on yourself), perhaps you can dig deeper and search for forgiveness and understanding. Realize that their fears compel them to lash out at you. The bottom line is that you must believe in yourself. Know who you are and what you want for your life.

If you've really done the work on yourself, perhaps you can dig deeper and search for forgiveness and understanding.

Although carbohydrates and fats supply us with energy, every cell in our body is constructed from the protein we eat. The principle role of protein in our bodies is to build and repair close to 300 billion cells daily, including muscles, ligaments and tendons. Protein is your muscle protector, and it is crucial to weight loss. The more lean muscle you have on your body the more calories you use day and night, even when you're sleeping.

Without protein, you will have a difficult time making and keeping muscle. Protein does not stimulate insulin production and is not converted to fat easily. It also helps to elevate our resting metabolic rate because it has a high "thermic" response. Thermogenesis is different than metabolism and refers to how our body burns stored body fat to produce heat. Protein has a very high thermic response. When we eat egg whites or chicken breast, for example, our bodies work overtime trying to break down the protein into a usable form. In fact, you can use up about 60 calories digesting a 200 calorie chicken breast.

Some protein sources are better than others. Protein that you should avoid or minimize in your diet includes dark meat and egg yolks. Healthy sources of protein are low in saturated fat such as fish, skinless chicken breast, skinless turkey breast, low-fat yogurt and cottage cheese, protein shakes and egg whites.

And despite what you might have heard, many of us do not eat adequate healthy protein. If you think that you might not be getting enough protein, try some protein powder in a smoothie. Whey protein, specifically high alpha-lactalbumin whey isolate, is biologically superior to even eggs, cow's milk, beef or chicken. Soy protein speeds metabolism, increases growth hormone levels, and supplies calcium, folic acid and iron. Be sure to purchase a soy protein powder in isolate form that is non-genetically modified. As always, purchase your supplements from a reliable manufacturer.

Crystal Andrus's column is a condensed version of her new book on personal transformation. She is an authority on women's health, a sought after speaker and author of the best seller Simply Woman! The 12 Week Body/Mind/Soul Total Transformation Program. www.hayhouse.com/details.php?id=2247

WHAT THE BLEEP IS KABBALAH?

Compiled by Chris Hanley

It's been called "the original spiritual wisdom" and "the theory of everything." Tracking back more than 4,000 years, Kabbalists say it's the tool we need to crack the code of laws for the workings of the entire universe. Using these laws of the universe, Kabbalah can offer a system that explains all of the real-life issues that keep us stuck in the garbage and reveals what we can do to create lasting happiness and fulfillment.

Kabbalah, in Hebrew, means, "to receive." From this simple meaning we are able to discover a profound secret about the purpose of Kabbalah – to teach us how to receive.

The question is, receive what?

Most answers usually include fulfillment, inner peace, prosperity, independence, joy and pleasure. None of which we can hold in our hand, nor can we locate them in physical space by defining their coordinates. According to Kabbalah, when you get to the very essence of what a human being truly wants to receive in his or her own life, it is of a non-physical nature.

The ancient Kabbalists called it energy. Since energy never dissipates the entire fulfillment and pleasures of life exist for us right here and right now. The problem is, we simply do not know how to tap into and reveal this energy in our lives.

Kabbalah states, just as we are limited in our ability to see energy on a physical level, we are also limited in our ability to see the energy of fulfillment. It could be inches away from our lives, yet we pass right over it. We fail to see radio waves, atoms and TV signals that bounce off the walls of our home. Our five senses filter out most of true reality, leaving us with a very limited picture. How are we to make decisions and judgments in life when we are permitted to glimpse only a microscopic portion of truth?

Even science tells us that humankind utilizes a mere 4 percent of our total brain capacity. Where is the remaining 96 percent? In the realm Kabbalists call the 99 percent realm.

"Did you every hum a piece of music in your mind, then turn on the radio and there it was? Did your phone ever ring and you knew who it was before you picked it up?" asks Yehuda Berg "These are experiences of the 99 percent. Those precious qualities of life – fulfillment, happiness, knowledge, peace and freedom – occur in this realm. In the 99 percent realm, whatever can go right, will go right."

Where is this 99 percent realm? How can we inject this 99 percent realm into our everyday life?

The answer to these questions and more will be addressed on Sunday, March 27 at The Kabbalah Factor, a one-day seminar held at The Hyatt Regency in Vancouver. All proceeds from the event will go to aiding those affected by the Asian tsunamis.

"The time for spiritual learning is just not there for some," explains Berg, creator of this life-enhancing workshop and author of The Power of Kabbalah. "Our goal is to provide people with the main tool they need for spiritual transformation." "The Kabbalah Factor is the missing piece of the puzzle, the simple secret that inspires a life of pure power, deep satisfaction and optimum results."

"What I have found from practising and teaching Kabbalah is that the essence of spirituality comes down to one thing," says Berg. "This is what I call The Kabbalah Factor."

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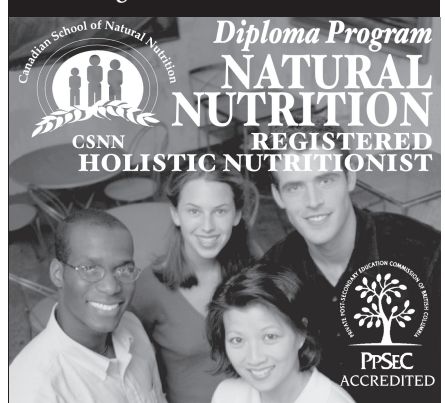

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Learning together

FILMS WORTH WATCHING

by Robert Alstead

A few years ago Czech director Jan Hrebejk mixed farce with the unlikely subject of Nazi collaboration in wartime Czechoslovakia in Divided We Fall. It made for a serious, moving and surprisingly funny movie. Hrebejk's latest film, *Up and Down* (Horem Pádem), tackles the awkward subject of racism in his native Czech Republic with a similar dose of comic relief, but this time he is working without the comfortable distance of half a century of history. The result is a more bitter-tasting satire, although not without some of the elements that made *Divided We Fall* so watchable.

When childless Mila brings home a stolen Indian baby, racist husband Franta is overwhelmed by a flood of conflicting emotions.

Hrebejk reveals a growing social unease and racism in modern Prague that surfaces in different guises across the social strata. This leads to subtly humourous, ironic observations on the absurd logic of some people's ideas, whether it be a Russian immigrant mother's complaints to her grown up son about the new wave of immigrants, or an upper-class aid worker who is blind to her patronizing attitude.

The characters in each of the three main stories also cross paths, in a universe that has a habit of playing private jokes on its inhabitants. However, even at its funniest there is an uncomfortable edge to the humour, like when Mila, a desperate, childless woman buys a two-month-old Indian baby on the black market, and brings it home to her husband Franta who is trying to put his soccer-hooligan days behind him. He is at once horrified that his white supremacist buddies will discover he has an infant with dark skin, overwhelmed with a sense of paternal love, and distressed because he knows that the baby was stolen and they will lose it. The film tries to show both the malaise and offer some hope, although there is a limited supply of the latter. Humour makes the truth more palatable, if ultimately the film ends up suggesting that some things shouldn't be laughed off.

Sharks have had a bad rap. Ever since *Jaws* made its big splash in 1975, sharks have had trouble shaking off their monsters-of-the-deep image. Sure, if you are a seal look out: sharks are ferocious predators. But, looking at it from a selfish human point of view, more people die from lightning strikes than from shark attacks. Still, we've hardly batted an eyelid as numerous shark species have been hunted – as trophies, exotic food (like shark fin soup) or out of just plain fear – to the brink of extinction. *Imax Sharks 3D* tries to redress the balance over the course of 42 minutes, by revealing the true nature of these prehistoric creatures and by submerging us in the rich subaquatic realm of a variety of shark species from around the world including the great white, hammerhead and whale shark. It's safe now to go back in the water.

Still with the natural world, the makers of *Microcosmos*, which brilliantly captured the minutiae of insect life, are back with a visually dazzling new film called *Genesis*. Although the feature length film takes a very much Darwinist perspective in its depiction of the origins and history of life on Earth, its meditative pace and artistic presentation makes this more than just an educational work.

Adrien Brody, who was so good in *The Pianist*, plays another victim of war in *The Jacket* (out on March 4). The film is a reality-shifting story about a Gulf War veteran who survives a head wound, but suffers memory loss. Before he knows it, he finds himself transported to a mental institution undergoing shock therapy. The film warps time and place, as the straightjacketed protagonist struggles with inner confusion and blurring reality. John Maybury's surrealist and edgy psychological thriller initially creates a tense viewing experience but, writes Elf on www.iofilm.ca, "despite its initial edginess, *The Jacket* treads a well-trodden road, tying up rather too neatly."

Historical drama *Silent Waters* (Khamosh Pani) illustrates the dangers of an oppressive patriarchal, religious society that led to so much violence towards women in the 1947 partition of the Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan. Tens of thousands of Muslim, Sikh and Hindu women were abducted, raped and killed in a kind of ethnic cleansing. The events of that era come back to haunt a Muslim widow in 1979 as she watches her beloved, teenage son drawn into an Islamic fundamentalist group. The film, from first time Pakistani director Sabiha Sumar, is at the Ridge from March 18 to 24.

Finally, one other film to look out for after March 4 is the documentary about chess grandmaster Gary Kasparov's historic contest with Big Blue, an IBM computer, in *Game Over: Kasparov and the Machine*.

Please note dates may be subject to change.

Robert Alstead writes for www.iofilm.ca

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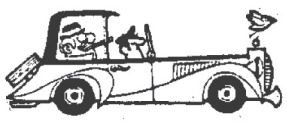

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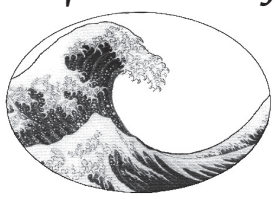

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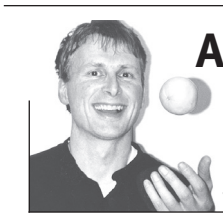

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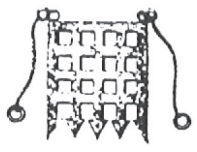

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So many gods, so many creeds;
So many paths that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind
Is all the sad world needs.
Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Letters

Synchronicity is afoot! For the past week or so I have been constantly listening to Mike Scott and The Waterboys' This Is the Sea re-release every time I am in my car, which is a lot. Being the only person I know who feels such a connection with Mike's music, other than a Brit who introduced me to the Waterboys back in '92, I found it quite amazing to gaze down and see the Common Ground cover!…for I agree with your take on Mike's music. It truly has heart and soul–a rare commodity in rock and roll.

I was at the Commodore in '01 for his last concert–an amazing concert. I only wish I could have been present at some of the earlier ones back in the '80s in England. I was however at a little sold-out church in Kits back in '94 or '95 where Mike performed solo and did some of his new solo tracks–pure magic!

At any rate, I just wanted to thank you and salute your article and cover feature on Mike and his music. Maybe it will help to get him back here soon.

Perry Zavitz,
Vancouver

What a talented writer you (Geoff Olson) are. I thoroughly enjoyed your article, The Artist as Early Warning System. I usually find it hard-slogging reading articles by literature scholars, because they seem to try too hard, but your writing has an appealing depth and flow. I found it highly insightful. Have you emailed a copy of your article to Mike Scott? I'm sure he'd appreciate it very much. Thank you for sharing your gift with us.

Lots of love,
Lorraine Sims, Vancouver

Just wanted to pass on that your article on Mike Scott and the Waterboys was a pleasure to read.

I managed to catch the band play in Toronto…and it was by far the best show I have ever witnessed...they pulled me in and gave me something extra special...

Your words really made those memories come flooding back–the Waterboys have always had a strong following on the Rock, but alas they have never played here. Maybe someday soon...

Thanks again,
Bob White,
Newfoundland

Beautiful, articulate, melodic, intelligent article on Mike Scott. You are clearly a skilled, gifted writer, Geoff. A joy to read – for the content and your words. Thank you!

Regards,
Maria Hauschel

EDITOR'S REPLY: Welcome to our new Arts and Entertainment section.

Re: Protest of fur auction

In watching all the different coverage of the protest, I watched with sheer horror and intense grief the footage of a fox being skinned alive, his face bloody, eyes still blinking, as well as a lynx struggling for his life against the grip of a leg-hold trap. It infuriated, shamed, and pained me to see such examples of the torture humans inflict on other living beings.

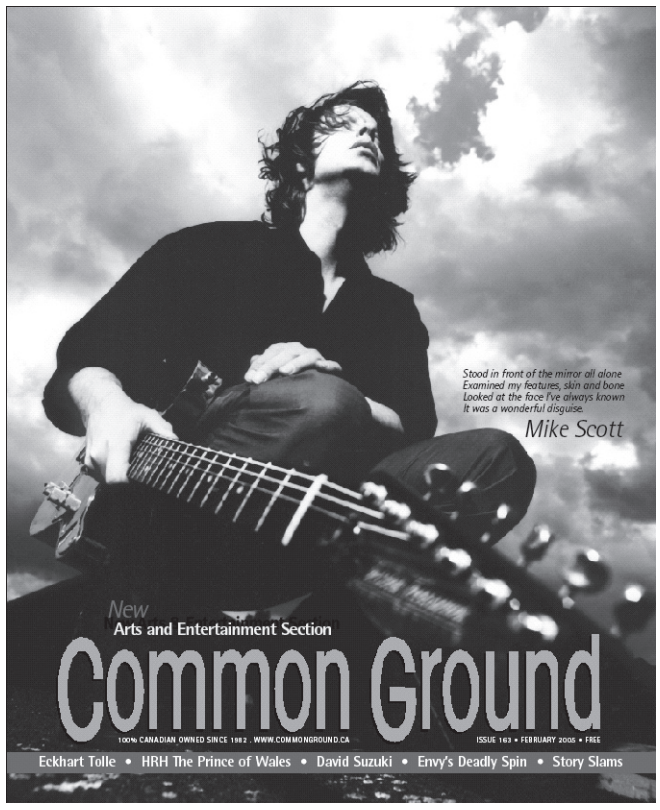
I appeal to the kind and compassionate part of people and ask you to please, please stop buying fur of any kind. If you buy it, you are the cause, because you create the demand. The most effective way we can put a stop to these appalling acts is to use our powers as consumers. We can use our dollars to say we will not stand for such abuse.

Sincerely,
Marianne Verigin,
Society for Animal Freedom and Equality, Burnaby
www.animalequality.org

I have never tried to email a complete stranger before but here goes. I have just read your excellent article (Anger, the Deadly Spin) and was really impressed by it. I am a senior who doesn't subscribe to newspapers anymore. I really related to the way you articulated some of the frustrations I am experiencing with my children and grandchildren. It is such a help to find some of the words I need to help discuss the problems I feel are arising in my family and the world as I see it. I shall be looking forward to seeing and reading more of your work.

Thank you.
Senior S

Thank you so much for writing Anger: the Seven Deadly Spins Continues in the January edition of Common Ground. I've been ranting privately about this insidious techno-propaganda and media brain-


Stood in front of the mirror all alone
Examined my features, skin and bone
Looked at the face I've always known
It was a wonderful disguise
Mike Scott
New
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ISSUE 163 • FEBRUARY 2005 • FREE
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washing for a while now. Most recently I decided to write something about the use of video games to make war look like "fun for profit" when I was subjected to a very offensive ad for the game Mercenaries on the Comedy channel, of all places, where players were gleefully invited to "blow the living snot" out of people, buildings, or whatever stood in their way. There is censorship in place regulating portrayal of sex, use of offensive language or racist comment, but here we have the media promoting high-tech violence in order to woo young males into misguided American war-mongering. As you point out, these are blatant recruitment ads that imply that fighting a war is just a matter of pushing a few buttons without seeing the whites of your enemies' eyes as you accumulate points to "win the game." It's just sick!

The prophecies of Marshall McLuhan have come true over and over again. With the use of so much technology in the home we are isolated from other human beings on an ever-increasing basis. There is a new class emerging that I've also been writing about: the technologically marginalized. I'm a community health worker. From what I have observed, the majority of people in this class are elderly and live in poverty. Because some can barely afford a telephone, much less a computer and Internet access, they are left out of the loop. What are their options when just about every information source these days tells them that if they want more information they need to go to: www, a website that I cannot access because I don't have the latest technology?"

I have found myself marginalized because I don't own a cell phone. I was at a public event not long ago and I needed to use a pay phone. I couldn't find one. When I asked a police officer where I could find one he stared at me like I was speaking a foreign language. After looking for some time I discovered that there weren't any public phones available. The assumption seemed to be that all of us own cell phones. Sorry, can't afford one. This is very disturbing. The lack of pay phones is also a safety issue.

I could go on and on about this but I'll spare you right now, although I think there needs to be something written about the technologically marginalized class.

Thanks again for bringing this to the public's attention.

Gwen Russell,
Victoria

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continued from page 17

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For more information visit Buffy's website www.creative-native.com or the Talking Stick Festival www.fullcircle.ca

On Track Zodiac

MARCH 2005 by Ilona Hedi Granik

ARIES (March 21 – April 19)
You could do well to invest wisely and not cut corners to get properly informed. Being frugal and focused shall improve the matters at hand. Coming into your power lately has helped you to lose your inhibitions. You will win if you play the game and keep your eye on the sparrow.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 21)
You feel elated and in the groove. Candles will be lit for romantic dinners. Canoe trips will ignite wonder and wild abandonment. Whatever you so cherish is within your grasp. Free up your calendar for the invitations that are on their way to you.

GEMINI (May 22 – June 20)
Not everyone is able to read minds. They may pretend to know what you need. Although you may feel stealthy in your communications, they can be parlayed now. It's your approach that is improving. Your secretive side may come out of the shadows.

CANCER (June 21 – July 22)
Your senses open up like a flower. Your cravings may instantly get satiated. It's as if you can dial up what you desire. This is a colossal time to invest in luxury items or simply indulge in your taste buds. These will be lasting pleasures. Nothing is taboo.

LEO (July 23 – Aug. 22)
You get the chance to embody the qualities within your heart. You arrive at your purpose and identify with others for a more compassionate path. Feeling that you have to walk across hot coals to arrive at your goal is subsiding. You have the way and the means to shine.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 – Sept. 22)
You may be witness to those around you not keeping their commitments. You can be the heavenly one and keep your word. Indeed it's a rare thing to find honesty. People can only inspire you to stay true to yourself. You are the emissary and it is not a path for the trendy.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 – Oct. 22)
Recycling is a good thing, but not when it comes to your emotions. Solutions appear to help you eliminate any feelings of ill will. Current celestial openings could compliment your daily events. Personal reckoning has its day in court. You are getting on with it and know what you need to accomplish.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 – Nov. 21)
Relationships are at a crossroads. New levels of relating are your main desire. The connection you seek is deeper and you may need solace to find your centre. Take some time off to rewrite your dream-mate wish list. Patience is key.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 – Dec. 21)
The ground beneath your feet is solid and your emotions are balanced. There will be some challenges ahead, but you are better equipped to handle them. You have come through the most difficult times arriving with great aplomb and personal style.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 – Jan. 19)
Perhaps the lid blows off your cool temperament. It has full reign after building up over several moons. Utilize this time to forge with tools that allow you to make your mark. The gods of destruction will work through you to rebuild on new terrain.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 – Feb. 19)
You've walked a mile in other people's shoes, now it's time to slip into your own moccasins. Courses in self esteem are needed or you could teach them, as we all teach what we need to learn most. Ask yourself if your intention is to gather sympathy or gain release from insecurities.

PISCES (Feb. 20 – March 20)
A new independence that you haven't tasted before now sparkles within you. The breakthrough that you used to dream of has come. You can shape life the way you want while you dance to your own tune. The angelic-beings hear your words of thanks and merriment. Happy trails to you.

Ilona Hedi Granik is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 31 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing. Ilona23@shaw.ca

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

List at: www.commonground.ca > Advertising > Datebook

DATEBOOK

MAR 2, 9, 16, 23

The Baha'i Faith - Introductory course. 7:30-9:30pm, Baha'i Centre 5880 Main St. @43rd. All are welcome to attend any or all sessions. $10 registration fee. Info (604)323-9919 www.vancouverbahai.org

MAR 6

Radio Kaboul: Ustad Mahwash & Friends "Music & Songs from Afghan People" Centennial Theatre, 2300 Lonsdale, North Van. www.caravanbc.org 604.984.4484

MAR 7 & APR 11

Pisces and Aries Astrological Dinners. New location! Better Price! Accents Restaurant. Join Host Teresa Waclawik with talk by Astrologer Dawn Muncaster. Dinner, door prizes & entertainment. To reserve: 604-732-5538

MAR 8

Going For Broke: How taxation and pension policies in Canada shortchange women. Free lecture. 7-9 pm, Alice MacKay Rm.; Vancouver Public Library. Call WE*ACT: 604-684-8171 (228).

MAR 9

Sun Yet Sen Garden - slide show presentation on the Healing benefits of the Garden 7:00 - 8:00 pm Lonsdale Quay Hotel, North Vancouver Free admission. 604-987-6959

Word Whips 7-9pm. Timed writing exercises Story Slam 9-11pm. Competition for 5 minute stories @ Our Town Cafe 245 E Broadway 604-254-0355 www.boltsoffiction.org

MAR 9TH , APR 13TH

Sacred Journeys with Jerry DesVoignes & One Voice Harmonic Choir—2nd Wednesday St. George's Chapel, 8:15 pm 2950 Laurel St. By donation. sacred chants/mantras, throat singing, Tibetan bells, conch shells. rsvp: 604-872-7117 jerry@healingvoices.net

MAR 13 - 20

Taling Stick, A Celebration of Aboriginal Artistry. Opening Gala with Buffy St Marie. Info: www.fullcircle.ca /604-683-8993

MAR 12, 13

Working with Indigo Children Workshop, (Sat) - $300 Discovering Your Psychic/ Intuitive Abilities, (Sun) -$250 (adult+1 child) Info/Registration: 604-947-0622 www.EllenHayakawa.com

Lift Up Your Voice! Gospel, World Music Choir Workshop led by Brian Tate, director, multi-faith, multicultural Universal Gospel Choir Register by March 4th. $250, meals accom. included Kawkawa Lake, Hope BC 1-866-869-3048

MAR 16

CMHA B.C. Division - Providing Tools to Better Manage Mental Illness and Addiction 7:00 - 8:00 pm Lonsdale Quay Hotel, North Vancouver Free Admission 604-987-6959

MAR 17

MDA of B.C. Free performance of, Crazy For Life, by Victoria Maxwell. 7pm, 1950 Windermere Street. Wheelchair accessible. 604.873.0103 or mdabc@telus.net.

MAR 18, 19, 20

Introduction to Hand Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Course. Intro: $10. Course: $295.00. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818.

MAR 19

StopWar.ca joins Global Day of Action 11:30am at Seaforth Peace Flame Park, march to Sunset Beach for 1pm rally with great speakers and music. Families welcome. Entertainment 604-737-1299.

MAR 23

Women's Anger speaker: Elaine Stoll 7:00 - 8:00 pm Lonsdale Quay Hotel, North Vancouver Free Admission 604-987-6959

MAR 25

Twisted Poets 7-9pm. Spoken word open mic Liars of Orpheus 9-11pm. All of the arts jam session @ El Cocal 1037 Commercial Dr 604-321-4039 www.pandorascollective.com

MAR 26

Wolfsong Spring Equinox/ Medicine Wheel Celebration. 7pm. Participate chanting shared sacred healing songs from the spirit of the land. Bring N. American hand drum, cedar flute, didgeridoo, crystal bowls. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Centre, 1254 W. 7th. Donation. www.shamanichealing.info 604.418.9636.

MAR 30

Stand Up for Mental Health - a Comedy Evening 7:00 - 8:00 pm Lonsdale Quay Hotel, North Vancouver Free Admission 604-987-6959

MAR 31

Bolts of Fiction. A Night of Magic Realism with authors Pauline Holdstock, Wayne Udi, & Bruce Taylor @ Our Town Cafe 245 E. Broadway 604-254-0355 www.boltsoffiction.org

APR

Artists in Our Midst - Vancouver's West Side participating artists open studios to the public in April. Studio tour maps available at community centres and www.artistsinourmidst.com

APR 1 - 2

Being Alive and Well: Pathways to Successful Living, a Two-day Symposium presented by The Haven Institute with Joseph Chilton Pearce. See our ad. Info & Reg: 1-877-247-9238 x 234 or www.haven.ca

APRIL 3

Kits Classics+Worlds Beyond presents Dharmakasa in a concert of mystical soundscapes 4:00pm 3214 W. 10th Ave. 604-732-3990 Free

APR 5

Satsang with Neelam who teaches with the blessing of HWL Poonja (Papaji). 7:30 pm, Masonic Hall 1495 W 8th Suggested donation $20.604 254-9150

APRIL 19-23

Heart Workshops Ancient Egypt Sacred Heart Wisdom, Grace of Heart, Heart Petals, Rainbow Healing Circle, Wesak Festival with the 3 Buddhas. Personal consultations. Spiritus Healing Centre, N. Vancouver. Alannah 604.982.0014. www.rainbowtara.org

MAY 7

2005 Great Salmon Send-off. Celebrate the return of salmon by releasing fry. Displays, refreshments and entertainment. All ages, free admission. 10:00am-2pm Stoney Creek Community School - 2740 Beaverbrook Crescent, Burnaby Linda Corrin 604-664-8849

JUN 13 – 25

Permaculture Design Course. Winlaw, B.C. Learn permaculture design principles & practical skills to implement ecological food producing ecosystems. 250-226-7302 permaculture@telus.net http://www3.telus.net/permaculture

SUNDAYS

The Centre for Spiritual Living Inspired by the teachings of Deepak Chopra and Louise Hay? You'll love our Sunday services, 11:00am. Children welcome. 1495 W. 8th Ave, Vancouver, 604-321-1225 www.cslvancouver.com

SUNDAYS

International Spiritualist Alliance #1A -320 Columbia Street, New West (Downstairs) 604-521-6336 . Sunday Services 11am . Rev. Joyce Tarvin 604-433-6663 www.isacanada.ca

MONDAYS

Shambhala Buddhism Open House 7pm meditation instruction, sitting meditation practice. 8pm refreshments, Buddhist talk and/or video and discussion. Free. Shambhala Meditation Centre, 3275 Heather at West 17th.

TUESDAYS

Reflexology Student Clinic sessions - only $15. Evenings only. By appointment. Pacific Institute of Reflexology. 604.875.8818

WEDNESDAYS

Hawaiian Healing Night 7pm. Hawaiian guided Meditation, Sharing the Aloha,and snacks after, meet like-minded people and share. $5.00 donation. At Hale Ola - a place of Healing 1215 Madison ave. Burnaby 604-431-7474 Kaimana and Moanikeala

Shambhala Open House 7pm meditation instruction, sitting meditation. 8pm refreshments, talk and discussion. Free. Shambhala Meditation Centre, 3275 Heather at West 17th.

THURSDAYS

The Happy Yogis pratiquent aussi le Hatha Yoga en Français à la maison de la Francophonie 227-1555 East 7th Le Jeudi de 17h10 à 18h10. Drop-in $10. Tel: 604-438-8616 Catherine"

FRIDAYS

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ONGOING

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CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

Only $2.49 per word, minumum charge $35. Follow the links at www.commonground.ca. Deadline is the 15th of the month

continued from page 5

Zamagni calls "relationship goods." This shift has resulted in the creation of thousands of local social co-operatives for the delivery of childcare, senior's care, health, and other social services.

These community co-ops are locally and democratically controlled, yet still funded by the State. The result is a more responsive delivery system that costs far less than government agencies. Through these co-ops, neighbourhood people control and manage the system, providing more value for money and much higher client or member satisfaction.

For the past eight years, the board at VanCity has provided a modest subsidy to support annual study tours to this fascinating region. For the past three years, VanCity and the BC Co-operative Association under John Restakis have developed a formal program with the University of Bologna, a program that includes one week in Vancouver and three weeks in Bologna. There is also an eight-day leadership tour of the region that covers the highlights of this amazing place.

The course is comprised of tours in the region (everything from successful social co-ops comprised of Downs syndrome members, to great machinery manufacturers like SACMI, to drug treatment programs like San Patrignano, food co-ops, and the magnificent Ducati motorcycle plant). The remainder of the program takes place at the university, with the extraordinary professors that work with Stefano Zamagni.

Dr Zamagni, who heads up this work at the university, represents Italy's best and brightest. Leaving Stefano's busy, cluttered yet ordered office, and strolling the campus or nearby Via Zamboni, the active neighbourhood becomes even more alive because of his presence. There are varying responses to this six-foot-four giant of a man. Prevailing responses convey joy, greetings, friendship, respect, familiarity, a generous reverence and outright love for the man. Like his brethren in the region, Stefano is networked to them all. You can't help loving the man and the place.

Stefano is Italy's seminal scholar in his field, mentored as a student at Oxford by a Nobel laureate, a recognition that might well yet be deserved for this extraordinary man.

Stefano, his colleagues and fellow citizens represent a search for quality amidst a life led with a passion that is rare. The Bolognese are part of a community that shares a love of learning, radical politics and a sense of well-being that may well be a model for the world.

For me, Vancouver's east side became a better place to live after the Italian immigrants arrived. I've now found a second home that is showing both me, and maybe all of us, a better way to live.

Bob Williams, a long time former MLA for Vancouver East, now jointly leads a summer educational program at the University of Bologna. www.unibo.it

continued from page 9

smell, what was the touch of really living?

Searching through her memories, one after the other, cautiously, they began to take shape, first as forms, then clear images. Birthdays, friendships, vacations, family dinners, laughter, concerts, nature, sunsets, boyfriends, bike rides, rainstorms, dancing. More and more thoughts came flooding back to her as she now crouched on her knees, breathing deeply. Hold on, damn it, hold on you're almost there. With a trembling chest she cried softly to herself. More tears flowed as she bowed her head, mumbling a quiet prayer to the life force that brought her into this world.

"I don't want to die, it's just, sometimes, I don't know how to live." Wiping the stream of tears off her face, she got up slowly. The crow sitting next to her flew from his perch. "Thank you," she said softly as he departed. "Thank you," she whispered, looking up. Sighing heavily, she headed home.

Trina Ferguson is a Vancouver author who began writing her first short stories three months ago specifically for Story Slam righteouslefty@yahoo.com. To contact Bolts of Fiction call Johnny Frem at 604-254-0355 or see www.boltsoffiction.org

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International Women's Day

March 8 2005

We habitually erect a barrier called blame that keeps us from communicating genuinely with others, and we fortify it with our concepts of who's right and who's wrong. We do that with the people who are closest to us and we do it with political systems, with all kinds of things that we don't like about our associates or our society. It is a very common, ancient, well-perfected device for trying to feel better. Blame others. Blaming is a way to protect your heart, trying to protect what is soft and open and tender in yourself. Rather than own that pain, we scramble to find some comfortable ground. – *In the Gap Between Right and Wrong* (Pema Chodron)

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continued from page 13

health insurance plans now cover mercury amalgam replacement making it possible for more people to recover their health.

After amalgam removal it is very important to use some form of oral or intravenous chelation therapy to help remove any mercury that may have been released into your body during the procedure. Some biological dentists and naturopathic doctors offer intravenous chelation services or you may choose to use oral chelation, which involves taking herbal and nutritional supplements that bind to mercury and allow the body to more easily excrete it. Cilantro and the blue-green algae chlorella, when taken together, have shown excellent results in removing mercury from the body and are an affordable, non-invasive method of chelation. Other helpful supplements are glutathione, the B vitamin complex, vitamin C, zinc, selenium, MSM and n-acetyl-cysteine. The book Dental Mercury Detox is a comprehensive resource that guides the individual through all stages of mercury amalgam removal and detoxification. Once all amalgams have been removed, some symptoms of toxicity may begin to clear up in as little as three months, however, others may take much longer. Be patient, detoxification of mercury is not an overnight process.

As natural medicine regains popularity and people become better informed about their health and how to maintain it, it becomes very obvious that an ounce of prevention is indeed worth a pound of cure. We can best achieve this by spreading the word; telling our family and friends that mercury is a poison, pure and simple, and should never be put into the human body. Above all else, we should prevent the poisoning of future generations and never allow it to be put into any child's mouth to begin with.

Joan Ullyett is a registered holistic nutritionist and works at Finlandia Natural Pharmacy. Contact her at info@finlandiapharmacy.com

VICTORIA BC May 27, 2005, 8PM

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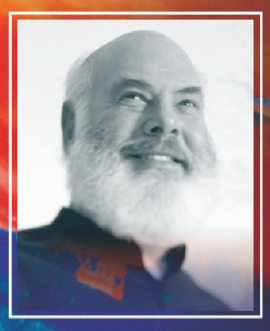

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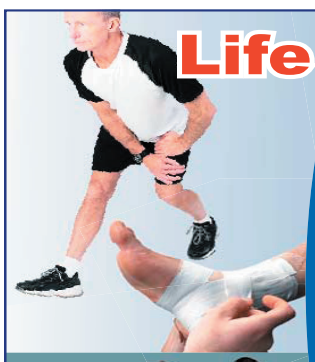

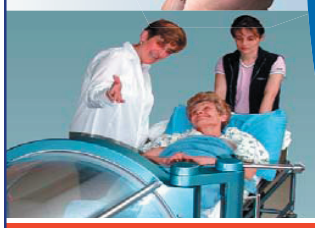

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Duke of Hazards

WOULD DUKE POINT'S GAS BURNING ELECTRIC PLANT BE SUMAS 3?

by Johnny Frem

Sometimes choices are driven by an agenda of politics or greed with ignorance to the long-term consequences to the environment. The choice by the BC Utilities Commission to allow a consortium to build a gas-fired electrical-generating station at Duke Point near Nanaimo seems like one such decision. The Commission granted permission February 17 for BC Hydro to sign the electricity purchasing agreement with Duke Point power – a project of Pristine Power. Several interveners have indicated that they will file appeals.

The Commission said virtually the same project was too expensive in September of last year, sending BC Hydro back to find a cheaper way to bring electricity to Vancouver Island. Unfortunately BC Hydro, anticipating approval, had already gone ahead and bought the turbines for the project for about $50 million. An interesting question here is who authorized this massive purchase prior to BCUC approval?

Instead of looking for a new way to supply power, BC Hydro put out the call for tenders and defined it such that the likely answer to its call would be a gas-fired plant. BC's utilities commission is supposed to prevent monopolistic practices. Allowing a corporation, any corporation, including BC Hydro, to define the parameters of the case under consideration appears to be an abdication of that responsibility.

First, BC Hydro "encouraged" the new project by offering its untouched turbines at discounted prices if the bidder agreed to take on the Duke Point gas-fired plant project. Then BC Hydro specified to the bidders that the electricity could only be generated on-island. Transmission lines coming from off-island would not be eligible for consideration – even though it defined the project as only a temporary solution and the final solution after 2008 would be new BC Hydro transmission lines from off-island. And finally, BC Hydro offered to guarantee the price of gas for 25 years to anyone agreeing to take its gas-fired project to completion, a gas guarantee that will be paid by BC electricity ratepayers.

Now the Commission is allowing the same project it had rejected the first time around as too expensive – even though BC citizens would be asked to pay extra when the price of gas to the plant increases, even though it's unneeded, unwanted and unhealthy, even though in the Liberals' throne speech they vowed to continue their opposition to a similar gas-fired plant – the Sumas 2 project under consideration south of the US border near Abbottsford, even though it violates their commitment to green energy in that same throne speech, and even though a task force of the biggest industrial users of electricity in BC are against it.

The green light to drive a climate-changing, gas-guzzling toxin-emitting electric generating plant at Duke Point came one day after Canada ratified the Kyoto Protocol

The green light to drive a climate-changing, gas-guzzling toxin-emitting electric-generating plant at Duke Point came one day after Canada ratified the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, likely putting Canada in breach of our international treaty obligations. One estimate states Duke Point would produce as much poisonous exhaust as 40,000 more cars each day. In the long run it seems we are being driven down the wrong road in regards to air pollution, lung damage and increased medical costs. Asthma is already one of the leading causes of emergency hospitalization among children in BC. More air pollution makes it worse. Not a clean choice.

The entire premise for this plant in the first place is that the sub-sea cables which carry high-voltage direct-current to Vancouver Island will be classified as outdated in 2007 and new lines won't exist until October 2008. First, they are not being "retired" as some media has reported. In fact BC Hydro maintenance plans show that it intends to keep them up and energized until 2014. They just lose their "reliability" rating from a system-planners point of view. Yakout Monsour, senior VP of system management for BC Transmission Corporation, testified before the Commission that he was completely comfortable handling the problem with current system assets until the implementation of the transmission solution in 2008 to 2009.

Second, several other solutions to the loss of those cables' reliability rating have also been suggested. Some at BC Hydro seem adamant that the only solution they are willing to entertain is a gas-fired plant. They discarded such submissions to the hearings as Norske Canada's "demand side management" solution, where Norske offered to reduce its use of electricity should the island ever approach crisis during the period of 2007 and 2008. As one of the largest users of electricity on-island it could resolve any shortfall in electricity very easily by shutting down some of its pulp mill process, which is what it offered to do. Norske is also concerned with uncontrolled increases in gas pricing and thus the cost of generating electricity.

BC Hydro's position is it wants "on-island generation." But in fact Duke Point is the farthest thing from "on-island" with Alberta gas piped in across the Georgia Straight. Another solution was offered by Sea Breeze Pacific Regional Transmission Company which is preparing to build a new transmission line across the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Hydro dismisses electrical cables from the bid process but it allows gas pipelines, coming from off-island. As Prince Rupert found out last year, when residents gathered in the civic centre to keep warm, pipelines can break too.

Several truly on-island solutions were offered but were bounced out of the tendering process for various reasons. Green Energy has a planned bio-mass plant, Norske Canada has a demand side management solution wherein it offered to shed its load (one quarter of Vancouver Island's total load) if there were any interruptions in service, two companies offered transmission solutions, there is a fully permitted 450 MW wind farm ready to be constructed on the north end of Vancouver Island that has already passed environmental review. Also several additional smaller runs of river hydro and waste wood plants were offered during tendering.

If this "temporary" solution is allowed then what might become of Duke Point's gas-fired generating plant? Could it be that the BC Utilities Commission or BC Hydro boards were stacked with pro-gas and pro-oil members? Would this future local market demand encourage off-shore oil drilling? It is time for all stakeholders, including ratepayers, to consider this important decision because we all would pay the environmental and increased electrical costs.

For further information and to voice your opinions contact the following:

BC Utilities Commission
www.bcuc.com

BC Hydro www.bchydro.com

BC Sustainable Energy Association
www.bcsea.org

BC Transmission Corporation
www.bctransco.com

BC Wind Energy Association
www.bcwea.org

David Suzuki Foundation
www.davidsuzuki.org

Green Party of BC
www.greenparty.bc.ca

Independent Power Producers of BC
www.ippbc.com

Norske Canada
www.norskecanada.com

Tsawassen Residents Against High Voltage Overhead Lines
www. Travhol.com

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continued from page 7

in the whole ecological crisis.

It's amazing how aware of this our young people are. The teenagers, a lot of the high school students, are very much aware that we're damaging the living body of the Earth. Certainly my daughter in college is painfully aware of all these issues.

All of this is trying to bring our society back into balance with the feminine and there's a great deal of resistance to the idea that your teenage male needs empathy, nurturing, care, love and so on. That's anathema to the American idea of the macho, competitive, driven male getting out there and winning his wings and making his place in the world.

BC With the US being a world dominant power, it's very hard to put an army together of gentle people.

JCP That's true. People who are nurtured don't make very good soldiers or competitive business tycoons. The idea that we're not born on this Earth for this sort of thing certainly negates the American dream and the people in power right now.

This is a time of real crisis. The astonishing level of violence and suicide in our children is simply a mirror of the crisis in adults and our whole society. All we can do is keep addressing the issue. If you want a brain system that functions and if you want to breed true intelligence and brilliance in young people, nurturing is the key. It also means establishing for them the safe space. They must feel safe, protected and nurtured to open up and just learn. Otherwise they're using half their mental energy to protect themselves and guard against the world out there, and the other half to learn whatever they need to protect themselves. It isn't working, it hasn't worked.

We need to think instead of building an educational system based on nurturing every young person, giving them a feeling of absolute safety and security. They thrive on a feeling that they're where they belong and that they're loved and wanted. If the schools were just switched to that simple idea we would see profound results.

Brent Cameron is the founder of the Wondertree Foundation and the Wondertree Virtual High and SelfDesign programs. Currently he is working on his PhD at UBC and has written a book on self-directed learning called SelfDesign *that will be on book shelves September 2005. The SelfDesign Learning Community currently has 500 learners working online across the province of BC and the Wondertree Learning Centre is working with children 5 to 13 in Vancouver. www.wondertree.org and www.selfdesign.org*

Joseph Chilton Pearce has written many best-selling books on human development. He has raised five children and over the past 30 years given more than 2,000 public addresses around the world explaining the latest research in child development to parents and educators. He has blended together research into a comprehensive model with a message that encourages everyone to love and nurture children. His latest book is The Biology of Transcendence. *Pearce will be in Vancouver, April 1, for a symposium on the heart-brain connection www.haven.ca*

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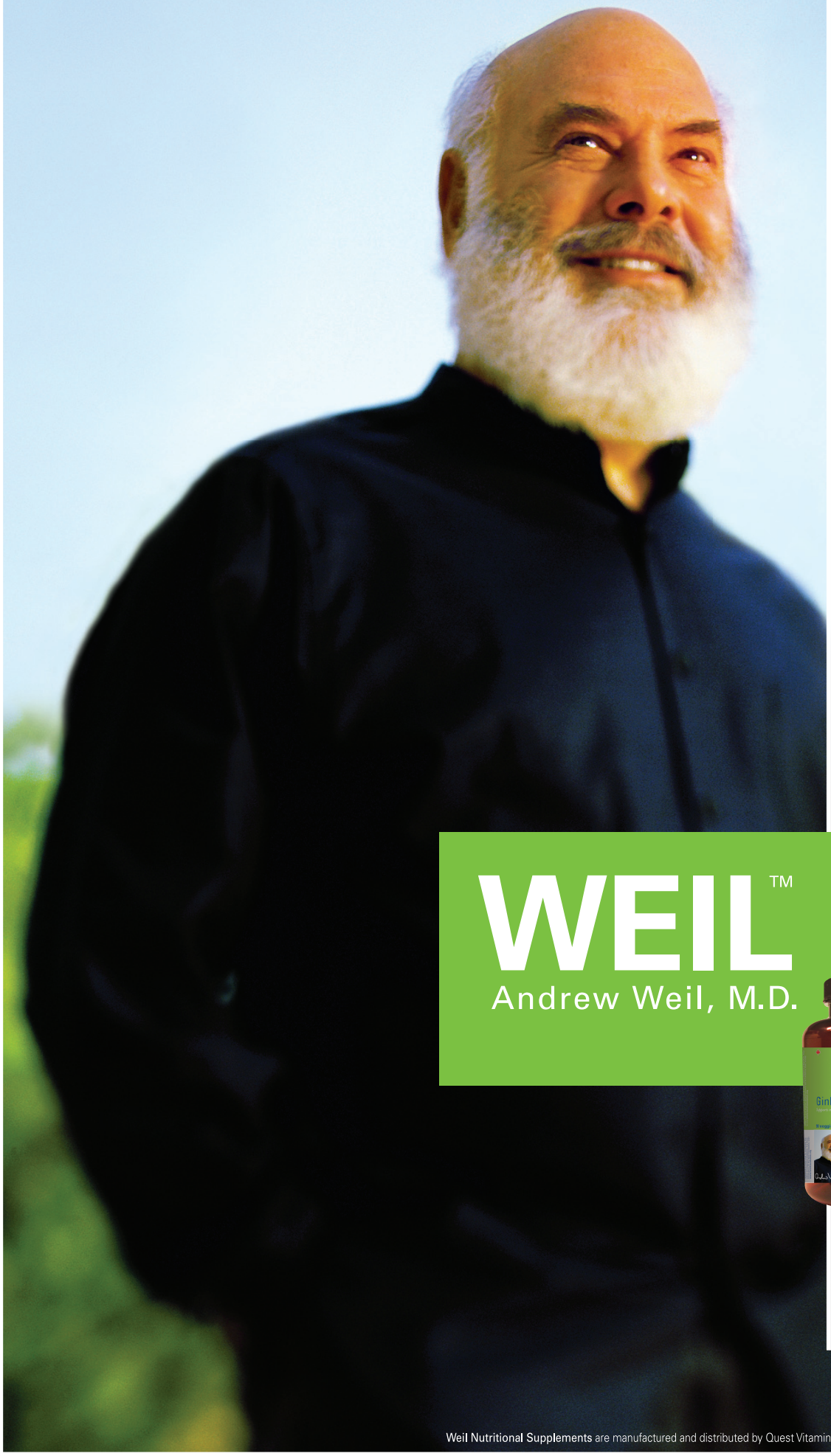

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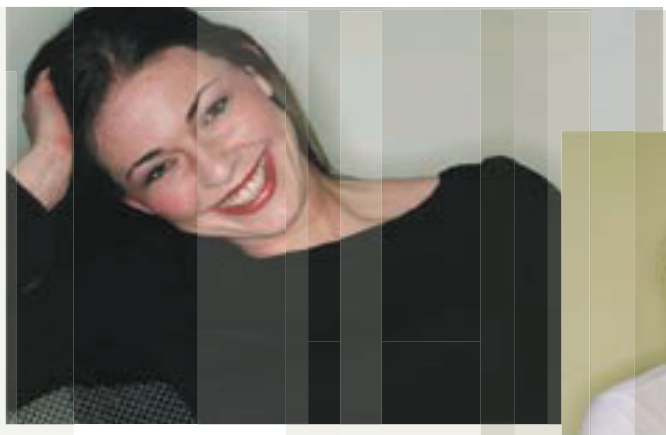

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